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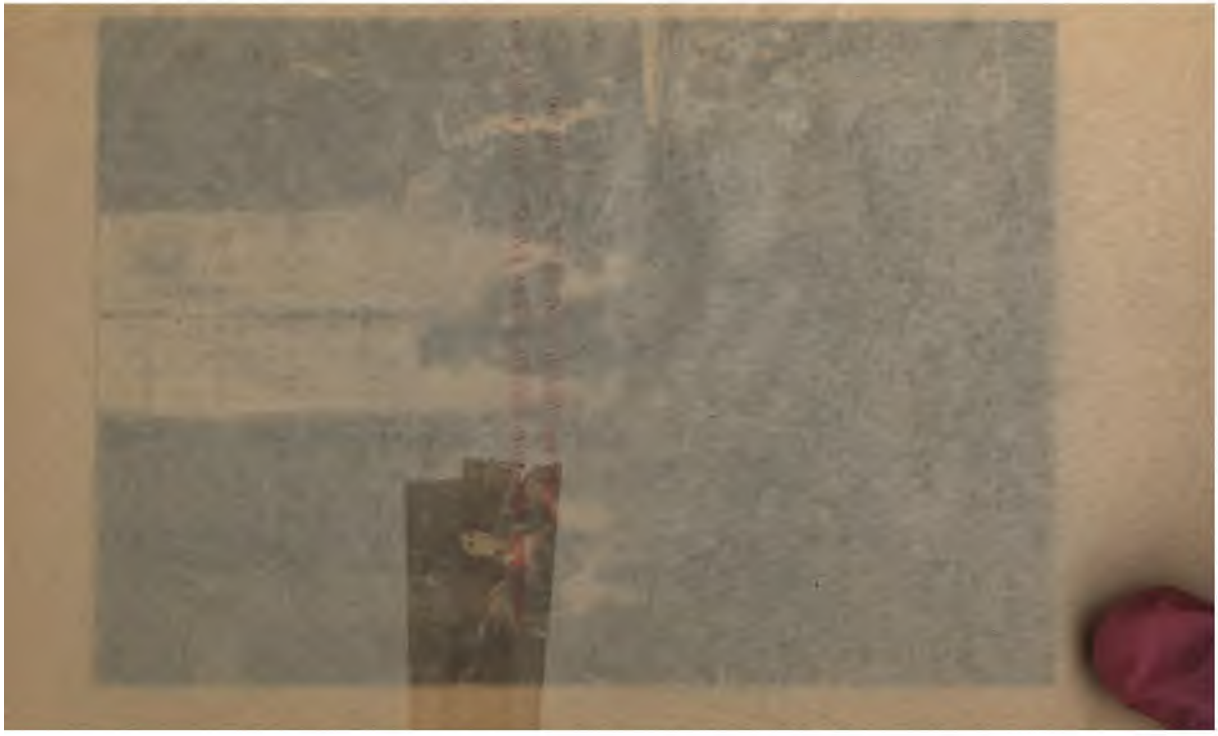
"*Monte Cristo turned round hastily and ... de Morcerf at the entrance of the ...*"

"Monte Cristo turned round hastily and ... de Morcerf at the entrance of the ..."



THE ROMANCES OF

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

Handy Library Edition

THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO

VOLUME TWO

THE ROMANCES OF ALEXANDRE DUMAS

THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO

VOLUME TWO

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY

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THE
COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO.

CHAPTER I.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

ALBERT'S first words to his friend on the following morning contained a request that he would accompany him to visit the count. True, he had warmly and energetically thanked him the previous evening; but services such as he had rendered were worthy of a twofold acknowledgment. Franz, who was attracted by some invisible influence towards the count, in which terror was strangely mingled, felt an extreme reluctance to permit his friend to be exposed alone to the singular fascination which the mysterious count seemed to exercise over him, and therefore made no objection to Albert's request, but at once accompanied him; they were ushered into the salon, and five minutes later the count appeared.

"Monsieur the Count," said Albert, advancing to meet him, "permit me to repeat the poor thanks I offered last night, and to assure you that the remembrance of all I owe to you will never be effaced from my memory; I shall always remember the important service you have rendered me, and that to you I am indebted even for my life."

"My dear neighbor," replied the count, with a smile, "you exaggerate your obligations to me. You owe me nothing but the saving of some twenty thousand livres in your travelling expenses. Permit me to congratulate you on the ease and unconcern with which you resigned yourself to your fate."

"Upon my word," said Albert, "I deserve no credit for what I could not help; namely, a determination to take everything as I found it, and to let those bandits see that although men get into troublesome scrapes all over the world, there is no nation but the French can smile even in the face of grim Death himself. All that, however, has nothing to do with my obligations to you; and I now come to ask you whether in my own person, my family, or connections, I can in any way serve you. My father, the Comte de Morcerf, although of Spanish origin, possesses considerable influence both at the court of France and Madrid, and I unhesitatingly place the best services of myself and all to whom my life is dear, at your disposal."

"M. de Morcerf," replied the count, "your offer, far from surprising me, is precisely what I expected from you; and I accept it in the same spirit of hearty sincerity with which it is made. I had already made up my mind to ask a great favor at your hands."

"What is it?"

"I am wholly a stranger to Paris; it is a city I have never yet seen."

"Is it possible," exclaimed Albert, "that you have reached your present age without visiting Paris? I can scarcely credit it."

"Nevertheless, it is quite true; still, I agree with you in thinking that my present ignorance of the first city in Europe is a reproach to me in every way, and calls for immediate correction. Probably I should have made that important journey long ago had I known any one who could introduce me into that world with which I have no connection."

"Oh! a man like you!" cried Albert.

"You are most kind; but since I find in myself no other merit than the ability to compete as millionnaire

with M. Aguado or with M. Rothschild, and since I do not go to Paris to speculate, that trifling circumstance has withheld me. Now your offer decides me. Let us see; you undertake, my dear M. de Morcerf" (these words were accompanied by a most peculiar smile), "upon my arrival in France, to open to me the doors of that fashionable world of which I know no more than a Huron or a native of Cochin China."

"Oh, that I do, and with infinite pleasure!" answered Albert; "and so much the more readily as a letter received this morning from my father summons me to Paris in consequence of a treaty for my alliance (my dear Franz, do not smile, I beg of you) with a family of high standing and connected with the very *élite* of Parisian society."

"Alliance by marriage?" said Franz, laughing.

"Good Lord, yes!" answered Albert; "so when you return to Paris you will find me settled down, and perhaps father of a family. That will agree well with my natural gravity, will it not? In any case, Count, I repeat that I and mine are devoted to you, body and soul."

"I accept," said the count, "for I give you my solemn assurance that I only waited an opportunity like the present to realize schemes I have long meditated."

Franz doubted not that these schemes were the same concerning which he had dropped some words in the grotto of Monte Cristo; and while the count spoke, the young man closely examined him in the hope of reading in his face some revelation of the plans which drew him to Paris. But it was very difficult to penetrate to the soul of that man, especially when he veiled it with a smile.

"But tell me now, Count," exclaimed Albert, delighted at the idea of having to introduce so distinguished a person as Monte Cristo, — "tell me truly whether you are in earnest, or if this project of visiting Paris is merely one

of those chimerical and uncertain things of which we make so many in the course of our lives, but which, like a house built on the sand, is liable to be blown over by the first puff of wind?"

"I pledge you my honor," returned the count, "that I mean to do as I have said; both inclination and positive necessity compel me to visit Paris."

"When do you propose going thither?"

"Have you made up your mind when you shall be there yourself?"

"Certainly I have, — in a fortnight or three weeks' time; that is to say, as fast as I can get there!"

"Well," said the count, "I will give you three months; you see I make an ample allowance for all delays and difficulties."

"And in three months' time," said Albert, "you will be at my house?"

"Shall we make a positive appointment for a particular day and hour?" inquired the count; "only let me warn you that I am desperately punctual."

"The very thing!" exclaimed Albert; "an exact appointment, — that suits me to a dot."

"So be it, then," replied the count; and extending his hand towards a calendar suspended near the chimney-piece, he said, "to-day is the 21st of February," and drawing out his watch, added, "it is exactly half-past ten o'clock. Now promise me to remember this, and expect me on the 21st of May at half-past ten in the forenoon."

"Capital!" exclaimed Albert; "breakfast will be ready."

"Where do you live?"

"No. 27 Rue du Helder."

"Have you bachelor's apartments there? I hope my
to any inconvenience."

"I reside in my father's hotel, but occupy a pavilion at the farther side of the courtyard, entirely separated from the main building."

"Good," replied the count, as taking out his tablets, he wrote down, "No. 27 Rue du Helder, 21st May, half-past ten in the morning." "Now then," said he, returning his tablets to his pocket, "make yourself perfectly easy; the hand of your timepiece will not be more punctual than I shall be."

"Shall I see you again before my departure?" asked Albert.

"That will be according to circumstances; when do you set off?"

"To-morrow evening, at five o'clock."

"In that case I must say adieu to you, as I am compelled to go to Naples, and shall not return hither before Saturday evening or Sunday morning. And you, Monsieur the Baron," pursued the count, addressing Franz, "do you also depart to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"To France?"

"No, to Venice; I shall remain in Italy for another year or two."

"Then we shall not meet in Paris?"

"I fear I shall not have that honor."

"Well, since we must part," said the count, holding out a hand to each of the young men, "allow me to wish you both a safe and pleasant journey."

It was the first time the hand of Franz had come in contact with that of this mysterious man, and unconsciously he shuddered at its touch, for it felt cold and icy as that of a corpse.

"Let us understand each other," said Albert; "it is agreed — is it not? — that you are to be in the Rue du

Helder on the 21st of May, at half-past ten in the morning, and your word of honor is passed for your punctuality?"

"All that is settled and arranged upon honor," replied the count; "rely upon seeing me at the time and place agreed on."

The young men then rose, bowed to the count, and quitted the room.

"What is the matter?" asked Albert of Franz, when they had returned to their own apartments; "you seem more than commonly thoughtful."

"I will confess to you, Albert," replied Franz, "that I am deeply puzzled to unravel the real career of this strange count; and the appointment you have made to meet him in Paris fills me with a thousand apprehensions."

"My dear fellow," exclaimed Albert, "what can there possibly be in that to excite uneasiness? Why, you are mad!"

"As you please," said Franz; "mad or not, so it is."

"Listen to me, Franz," said Albert; "and I am glad of the opportunity to tell you that I have noticed a marked coldness in your manner towards the count, who on the other hand has been simply perfect in his manner towards us. Have you anything against him?"

"Possibly."

"Did you ever meet him previously to coming hither?"

"I have."

"And where?"

"Will you promise me not to repeat a single word of what I am about to tell you?"

"I promise."

"Upon honor?"

"Upon honor."

"That is satisfactory; listen, then."

Franz then related to his friend the history of his ex-

cursion to the island of Monte Cristo, and of his finding a party of smugglers there, with whom were two Corsican bandits. He dwelt with considerable force and energy on the almost magical hospitality he had received from the count, and the magnificence of his entertainment in the grotto of the "Thousand and One Nights." He recounted all the particulars of the supper, — the hashish, the statues, the dream, and the reality; and how at his awakening there remained no proof or trace of all these events, save the small yacht seen in the distant horizon sailing towards Porto Vecchio. Then he detailed the conversation overheard by him at the Colosseum between the count and Vampa, in which the count had promised to obtain the release of the bandit Peppino, — an engagement which as our readers are aware, he most faithfully fulfilled. At last he arrived at the adventure of the preceding night, and the embarrassment in which he found himself placed by not having six hundred or seven hundred piastres, and his idea of applying to the count, — an idea which had led to results so picturesque and satisfactory.

Albert listened with the most profound attention. "Well," said he, when Franz had concluded, "what do you find to object to in all you have related? The count is fond of travelling, and being rich possesses a vessel of his own. Go to Portsmouth or Southampton, and you will find the harbors crowded with the yachts belonging to wealthy Englishmen who have the same fancy. To have a resting-place in his travels; to escape the frightful cooking which has poisoned us, — me for four months, you for four years; to avoid lying on these abominable beds on which no one can sleep, — he furnishes a place at Monte Cristo. Then, when his place is furnished he fears that the Tuscan Government will drive him away, and that his expenses will be lost money; he therefore buys the island

and takes its name. Just ask yourself, my good fellow, whether there are not many persons of our acquaintance who assume the names of lands and properties they never in their lives were master of."

"But," said Franz, "how do you account for the circumstance of the Corsican bandits being among the crew of his vessel?"

"Well, what is there surprising in that? Nobody knows better than yourself that the bandits of Corsica are not rogues or thieves, but purely and simply fugitives driven by some vendetta from their native town or village, and that their fellowship involves no disgrace or stigma; for my own part I protest that should I ever visit Corsica, my first visit, ere even I presented myself to the governor or prefect, should be to the bandits of Colomba, if I could only manage to meet them. I find them charming."

"Still," persisted Franz, "I suppose you will allow that such men as Vampa and his band are villains who have no other motive than plunder when they seize your person. How do you explain the influence of the count over those ruffians?"

"My good friend, as in all probability I owe my present safety to that influence, it would ill become me to search too closely into its source. Therefore, instead of condemning him for his intimacy with outlaws, you must give me leave to excuse any little irregularity there may be in such a connection, — not altogether for preserving my life, for my own idea was that it never was in much danger; but certainly for saving me four thousand piastres, which, being translated, means neither more nor less than twenty-four thousand livres of our money, — a sum at which, most assuredly, I should never have been estimated in France; proving most indisputably," added Albert, with a laugh, "that no prophet is honored in his own country."

"Talking of countries," replied Franz, "of what country is the count; what is his native tongue; what are his means of existence; whence does he derive his immense fortune; what were those events of his early life — a life as marvellous as unknown — that have tinctured his succeeding years with so dark and gloomy a misanthropy? Certainly these are questions that in your place I should like to have answered."

"My dear Franz," replied Albert, "when upon receipt of my letter you found the necessity of asking the count's assistance, you promptly went to him, saying, 'My friend Albert de Morcerf is in danger; help me to deliver him.' Was not that nearly what you said?"

"It was."

"Well, then, did he ask you, 'Who is M. Albert de Morcerf; how does he come by his name, his fortune; what are his means of existence; what is his birth-place; of what country is he a native? Tell me, did he put all these questions to you?"

"I confess he asked me none."

"No; he merely came and freed me from the hands of M. Vampa, where, I can assure you, in spite of all my appearance of ease and unconcern, I did not very particularly care to remain. Now then, Franz, when in return for services so promptly and unhesitatingly rendered, he but asks me to do for him what is done daily for any Russian prince or Italian noble who may pass through Paris, — merely to introduce him into society, — would you have me refuse? My good fellow, you must have lost your senses to think it possible I could act with such cold-blooded policy." And this time it must be confessed that contrary to custom, all the good arguments were on Albert's side.

"Well," said Franz, with a sigh, "do as you please, my

dear viscount, for your arguments are beyond my powers of refutation. But it is none the less true that this Count of Monte Cristo is a strange man."

"He is a philanthropist," answered the other; "and no doubt his motive in visiting Paris is to compete for the Monthyon prize. If my vote and interest can obtain it for him, I will readily give him the one and promise the other. And now, my dear Franz, let us talk of something else. Come, shall we take our luncheon, and then pay a last visit to St. Peter's?" Franz silently assented; and the following afternoon at half-past five o'clock, the young men parted, — Albert de Morcerf to return to Paris, and Franz d'Épinay to pass a fortnight at Venice. But ere he entered his travelling-carriage, Albert, fearing that his expected guest might forget the engagement he had entered into, placed in the care of the waiter of the hotel a card to be delivered to the Count of Monte Cristo, on which, beneath the name of Albert de Morcerf, he had written in pencil, "27 Rue du Helder, May 21, half-past ten, A. M."

CHAPTER II.

THE GUESTS.

In the house in the Rue du Helder, to which Albert had invited the Count of Monte Cristo, preparation was made on the morning of the 21st of May to honor the young man's invitation. Albert de Morcerf inhabited a pavilion situated at a corner of a large court, and directly opposite another building in which were the servants' apartments. Two windows only of the pavilion faced the street; three other windows looked into the court, and two at the back into the garden. Between the court and the garden, built in the heavy style of the imperial architecture, was the large and fashionable dwelling of the Comte and Comtesse de Morcerf. A high wall surrounded the whole of the hotel, surmounted at intervals by vases filled with flowers, and broken in the centre by a large gate of gilded iron which served as the carriage entrance. A small door close to the lodge of the *concierge* gave ingress and egress to the servants or to the masters when they were on foot.

In this choice of the pavilion as Albert's residence it was easy to discern the delicate care of a mother unwilling to part from her son, and yet aware that he required the full exercise of his liberty; also, it must be admitted, the intelligent egotism of the young man himself, captivated by that free and idle life. Through these two windows looking into the street, Albert could see all that passed; the sight of what is going on is so necessary to young men,

who wish always to see the world traverse their horizon, be that horizon but the street only. Then should anything appear to merit a more minute examination, Albert de Morcerf could follow up his researches by going out at a small gate, similar to that close to the *concierge's* door, and which merits a particular description. It was a little entrance that seemed never to have been opened since the house was built, so entirely was it covered with dust and dirt; but the well-oiled hinges and locks announced a frequent and mysterious employment. This door laughed at the *concierge*, from whose vigilance and jurisdiction it escaped, opening, like the door in the "Arabian Nights," the "Sesame" of Ali Baba, by a cabalistic word, or a concerted tap without, from the sweetest voices or whitest fingers in the world. At the end of a long corridor with which the door communicated, and which formed the ante-chamber, was, on the right, Albert's breakfast-room looking into the court, and on the left the salon looking into the garden. Shrubs and creeping plants covered the windows and hid from the garden and court these two rooms, — the only rooms into which, as they were on the ground-floor, the prying eyes of the curious could penetrate. On the first floor were corresponding rooms, with the addition of a third formed out of the ante-chamber; these three rooms were a salon, a boudoir, and a bedroom. The salon downstairs was only an Algerian divan for the use of smokers. The boudoir upstairs communicated with the bedchamber by an invisible door on the staircase; it was evident that every precaution had been taken. Above this floor was a large studio, which had been increased in size by pulling down the partitions, — a pandemonium, in which the artist and the dandy strove for pre-eminence. There were collected and piled up all Albert's successive caprices, — hunting-horns, bass-viols, flutes, — a whole

orchestra, for Albert had had, not a taste, but the whim for music; easels, palettes, brushes, pencils, — for the whim for music had been succeeded by a fatuous passion for painting; foils, boxing-gloves, broad-swords, and single-sticks, — for following the example of the fashionable young men of the time, Albert de Morcerf cultivated with far more perseverance than music and drawing the three arts that complete a dandy's education, namely, fencing, boxing, and single-stick; and it was in this room that he received Grisier, Cook, and Charles Lecour. The rest of the furniture of this privileged chamber consisted of old cabinets of the time of Francis I., filled with China and Japan vases, earthenware from Lucca or Robbia, plates of Bernard de Palissy; of old armchairs, which perhaps Henry IV. or Sully, Louis XIII. or Richelieu had occupied, — for two of these armchairs, adorned with a carved shield on which were engraved the *fleur-de-lis* of France on an azure field, evidently came from the Louvre, or at least some royal residence. On these dark and sombre chairs were thrown splendid stuffs, dyed beneath Persia's sun or woven by the fingers of the women of Calcutta or of Chandernagor. What these stuffs were there for it was impossible to say. They awaited, while gratifying the eyes, a destination unknown to their owner himself; in the mean time they filled the room with their golden and silky reflections. In the centre of the room was a piano in rosewood, of Roller and Blanchet, of small dimensions, but containing an orchestra in its narrow and sonorous cavity, and groaning beneath the weight of the *chefs-d'œuvre* of Beethoven, Weber, Mozart, Haydn, Grétry, and Porpora. On the walls, over the doors, on the ceiling, were swords, daggers, Malay creeses, maces, battle-axes, suits of armor gilded, damaskeened, and inlaid, dried plants, minerals, and stuffed birds, opening their

flame-colored wings as if for flight, and their beaks that never close. This was the favorite sitting-room of Albert.

However, on the day of the appointed rendezvous the young man had established himself in the small salon downstairs. There, on a table surrounded at some distance by a large and luxurious divan, every species of tobacco known, from the yellow tobacco of Petersburg to the black tobacco of Sinai, the Maryland, the Porto Rico, and the Latakia, was exposed in those pots of crackled earthenware of which the Dutch are so fond. Beside them in boxes of fragrant wood were ranged, according to their size and quality, *puros*, regalias, havanas, and manillas; and in an open cabinet a collection of German pipes, of chibouques with their amber mouth-pieces ornamented with coral, and of nargiles with their long tubes of morocco, awaited the caprice or the desire of the smokers. Albert had himself presided at the arrangement, or rather the symmetrical derangement which after coffee the guests at a breakfast of modern days like to contemplate through the vapor that escapes from their mouths, and ascends in long and fanciful wreaths to the ceiling. At a quarter to ten a valet entered; he composed, with a little groom named John and who spoke English only, all Albert's establishment, although the cook of the hotel was always at his service, and on great occasions the count's *chasseur* also. This valet, whose name was Germain, and who enjoyed the entire confidence of his young master, held in one hand a number of papers, and in the other a packet of letters which he gave to Albert. Albert glanced carelessly at the different missives, selected two written in a small and delicate hand and enclosed in scented envelopes, opened them, and perused their contents with some attention. "How did these letters come?" said he.

"One by the post; Madame Danglars's footman left the other."

"Let Madame Danglars know that I accept the place she offers me in her box. Wait; then, during the day, tell Rosa that when I leave the opera I will sup with her as she wishes. Take to her six bottles of assorted wines, — Cyprus, sherry, and Malaga, — and a keg of Ostend oysters; get the oysters at Borel's, and be sure you say they are for me."

"At what o'clock, Monsieur, do you breakfast?"

"What time is it now?"

"A quarter to ten."

"Very well; at half-past ten. Debray will perhaps be obliged to go to his office; and besides [Albert looked at his tablets], it is the hour I appointed with the count, — May 21, at half-past ten, — and though I do not much rely upon his promise, I wish to be punctual. Is Madame the Countess up yet?"

"If Monsieur the Viscount wishes, I will inquire."

"Yes; ask her for one of her *liqueur* cellarets, — mine is incomplete; and tell her I shall have the honor of seeing her about three o'clock, and that I request permission to introduce some one to her."

The valet left the room. Albert threw himself on the divan, tore off the cover of two or three of the papers, looked at the playbills, made a face at perceiving they played an opera and not a ballet, hunted vainly among the advertisements for a new tooth-powder of which he had heard, and threw down, one after the other, the three leading papers of Paris, muttering, "These papers become more and more stupid every day." A moment after, a carriage stopped before the door, and the servant announced M. Lucien Debray. A tall young man, with light hair, clear gray eyes, and thin, compressed lips,

dressed in a blue coat with buttons of gold beautifully carved, a white neckcloth, and a tortoise-shell eye-glass suspended by a silken thread, and which by an effort of the superciliary and zygomatic nerves he fixed in his eye, entered with a half-official air, without smiling or speaking.

"Good-morning, Lucien! good-morning!" said Albert; "your punctuality really alarms me. What do I say? Punctuality! You, whom I expected last, you arrive at five minutes to ten, when the time fixed was half-past! It is wonderful! Has the ministry fallen?"

"No, my dear fellow," returned the young man, seating himself on the divan; "reassure yourself. We are tottering always, but we never fall; and I begin to believe that we shall pass comfortably into a state of permanence, — without reckoning that the affairs of the Peninsula will completely consolidate us."

"Ah, true! you drive Don Carlos out of Spain."

"No, no, my dear fellow; do not confound our plans. We take him to the other side of the French frontier, and offer him hospitality at Bourges."

"At Bourges?"

"Yes, he has not much to complain of; Bourges is the capital of Charles VII. What! You didn't know that? All Paris knew it yesterday; and the day before it had already transpired on the Bourse, and M. Danglars (I do not know by what means that man contrives to obtain intelligence as soon as we do) speculated for a rise, and won a million!"

"And you another order apparently, for I see you have a blue ribbon at your button-hole."

"Yes, they sent me the order of Charles III.," returned Debray, carelessly.

"Come, do not affect indifference, but confess you were pleased to

"Oh, it is very well as a finish to the toilet. It looks very neat on a black coat buttoned up."

"And makes you resemble the Prince of Wales or the Duc de Reichstadt."

"It is for that reason you see me so early."

"Because you have the order of Charles III., and you wish to announce the good news to me?"

"No, because I passed the night writing letters, — five and twenty despatches. I returned home at day-break and strove to sleep; but my head ached, and I got up to ride for an hour. At the Bois de Boulogne, *ennui* and hunger attacked me at once, — two enemies who rarely accompany each other, and who are yet leagued against me, a sort of Carlo-republican alliance. I then recollected that you were to give a breakfast this morning, and here I am. I am hungry; feed me. I am bored; amuse me."

"It is my duty as your host," returned Albert, ringing the bell, while Lucien turned over with his gold-mounted cane the papers that lay on the table. "Germain, a glass of sherry and a biscuit. In the mean time, my dear Lucien, here are cigars — contraband, of course; try them, and persuade the minister to sell us such instead of poisoning us with cabbage-leaves."

"*Peste!* I will do nothing of the kind; so long as they came from Government you would find them execrable. Besides, that does not concern the home but the financial department. Address yourself to M. Humann, Section of the Indirect Contributions, Corridor A, No. 56."

"On my word," said Albert, "you astonish me by the extent of your acquaintance. Take a cigar."

"Really, my dear viscount," replied Lucien, lighting a manilla at a rose-colored taper that burned in a stand beautifully enamelled, "how happy you are to have nothing to do; you do not know your own good fortune!"

"And what would you do, my dear pacificator of kingdoms," replied Morcerf, with a slight degree of irony in his voice, "if you did nothing? What! private secretary to a minister, plunged at the same time into European cabals and Parisian intrigues; having kings, and better still queens to protect, parties to unite, elections to direct; achieving more from your cabinet with your pen and your telegraph than Napoleon did from his battle-fields with his sword and his victories; possessing five and twenty thousand livres a year, besides your place; a horse for which Château-Renaud offered you four hundred louis, and which you would not part with; a tailor who never disappoints you; having access to the Opera, the Jockey Club, and the Variétés, — in all that can you not find enough to amuse you? Well, I will amuse you."

"How?"

"By introducing to you a new acquaintance."

"A man or a woman?"

"A man."

"I know so many already."

"But you do not know this man."

"Where does he come from, — the end of the world?"

"Farther still, perhaps."

"The devil! I hope he does not bring our breakfast with him."

"Oh, no; our breakfast is cooking in the maternal kitchen. You are hungry, then?"

"Humiliating as such a confession is, I am. But I dined at M. de Villefort's, and lawyers always give you very bad dinners. You would think they felt some remorse; did you ever remark that?"

"Ah! depreciate other persons' dinners; you ministers give such splendid ones."

"Yes; but we do not invite people of fashion. If we

were not forced to entertain a parcel of country boobies because they think and vote with us, we should never dream of dining at home, I assure you."

"Well, take another glass of sherry and another biscuit."

"Willingly. Your Spanish wine is excellent. You see we were quite right to pacify that country."

"Yes; but Don Carlos?"

"Well, Don Carlos will drink Bordeaux; and in ten years we will marry his son to the little queen."

"You will then obtain the Golden Fleece, if you are still in the ministry."

"I think, Albert, you have adopted the system of feeding me on smoke this morning."

"Well, you must allow it is the best thing for the stomach; but I hear Beauchamp in the next room. You can dispute together, and that will pass away the time."

"About what?"

"About the papers."

"My dear friend," said Lucien, with an air of sovereign contempt, "do I ever read the papers?"

"Then you will dispute the more."

"M. Beauchamp," announced the servant.

"Enter, enter!" said Albert, rising and advancing to meet the young man. "Here is Debray, who detests you without reading you, so he says."

"He is quite right," returned Beauchamp; "for I criticise him without knowing what he does. Good-day, Commander!"

"Ah! you know that already," said the private secretary, smiling and shaking hands with him.

"*Pardieu!*"

"And what do they say of it in the world?"

"In which world? we have so many worlds in the year of grace 1838."

"In the critico-political world, of which you are one of the leaders."

"They say that it is quite fair; and that you sow so much red that you must reap a little blue."

"Come, come! that is not bad!" said Lucien. "Why do you not join our party, my dear Beauchamp? With your talents you would make your fortune in three or four years."

"I only await one thing before following your advice, — that is, a minister who will hold office for six months. My dear Albert, one word; for I must get poor Lucien a respite. Do we breakfast or dine? I must go to the Chamber, for our life is not an idle one."

"We breakfast only. I await two persons; and the instant they arrive we shall sit down to table."

"And what sort of persons do you expect to breakfast?" said Beauchamp.

"A gentleman, and a diplomatist."

"Then we shall have to wait two hours for the gentleman, and three for the diplomatist. I shall come back to dessert; keep me some strawberries, coffee, and cigars. I shall take a cutlet on my way to the Chamber."

"Do not do anything of the sort, — for were the gentleman a Montmorency, and the diplomatist a Metternich, we will breakfast at eleven; in the mean time, follow Debray's example, and take a glass of sherry and a biscuit."

"Be it so; I will stay. I must do something to distract my thoughts."

"You are like Debray; and yet it seems to me that when the minister is out of spirits, the opposition ought to be joyous."

"Ah, you do not know with what I am threatened. I shall hear this morning M. Danglars make a speech at the Chamber of Deputies; and at his wife's this evening

I shall hear the tragedy of a peer of France. The devil take the constitutional government! Since we had our choice, as they say at least, how could we choose that?"

"I understand; you must lay in a stock of hilarity."

"Do not run down M. Danglars's speeches," said Debray; "he votes for you, for he belongs to the opposition."

"*Pardieu!* that is exactly the worst of all. I am waiting until you send him to speak at the Luxembourg, to laugh at my ease."

"My dear friend," said Albert to Beauchamp, "it is plain that the affairs of Spain are settled, for you are most desperately out of humor this morning. Recollect that Parisian gossip has spoken of a marriage between myself and Mademoiselle Eugénie Danglars; I cannot in conscience therefore let you run down the speeches of a man who will one day say to me, 'Monsieur the Viscount, you know I give two millions to my daughter.'"

"Ah, this marriage will never take place," said Beauchamp. "The king has made him a baron and can make him a peer, but he cannot make him a gentleman; and the Comte de Morcerf is too aristocratic to consent for the paltry sum of two millions to a *mésalliance*. The Vicomte de Morcerf can wed only a marchioness."

"Two millions! it is a nice little sum," replied Morcerf.

"It is the capital stock of a theatre on the boulevard, or a railroad from the Jardin des Plantes to La Râpée."

"Never mind what he says, Morcerf," said Debray; "do you marry her. You marry a ticket to a money-bag, it is true; well, but what does that matter? It is better to have a blazon less and a figure more on it. You have seven martlets on your arms. Give three to your wife, and you will still have four; that is one more than M. de Guise had, who so nearly became King of France, and whose cousin was Emperor of Germany."

"On my word, I think you are right, Lucien," said Albert, absently.

"To be sure; besides, every millionnaire is as noble as a bastard, — that is, he can be."

"Do not say that, Debray," returned Beauchamp, laughing, "for here comes Château-Renaud, who, to cure you of your mania for paradoxes, will pass the sword of Renaud de Montauban, his ancestor, through your body."

"He will sully it then," returned Lucien; "for I am low — very low."

"Oh, heavens!" cried Beauchamp, "the minister quotes Béranger; what shall we come to next?"

"M. de Château-Renaud! M. Maximilian Morrel!" said the servant, announcing two new guests.

"Now, then, to breakfast," said Beauchamp; "for if I remember, you told me you only expected two persons, Albert."

"Morrel!" muttered Albert, — "Morrel! who is he?" But before he had finished, M. de Château-Renaud, a handsome young man of thirty, gentleman all over, — that is, with a figure of a Guiche and the wit of a Montemart, — took Albert's hand. "My dear Albert," said he, "let me introduce to you M. Maximilian Morrel, captain of Spahis, my friend, and what is more, my preserver. And besides all that, he carries his credentials in his own person. Salute my hero, Viscount." And he stepped on one side, exhibiting the large and open brow, the piercing eyes, and black mustache of the fine and noble young man whom our readers have already seen at Marseilles under circumstances sufficiently dramatic not to be forgotten. A rich uniform, half French, half Oriental, set off his broad chest, decorated with the order of the Legion of Honor, and his graceful and stalwart figure. The young officer bowed with easy and elegant politeness.

"Monsieur," said Albert, with affectionate courtesy, "M. le Comte de Château-Renaud knew how much pleasure this introduction would give me; you are his friend, be ours also."

"Well said!" interrupted Château-Renaud; "and pray that should the case require it, he may do as much for you as he did for me."

"What has he done?" asked Albert.

"Oh! nothing worth speaking of," said Morrel; "M. de Château-Renaud exaggerates."

"Not worth speaking of!" cried Château-Renaud; "life is not worth speaking of! — that is rather too philosophical, on my word, Morrel. It is very well for you, who risk your life every day; but for me, who only did so once — "

"What is evident in all this, Baron, is that M. le Capitaine Morrel saved your life."

"Exactly so."

"On what occasion?" asked Beauchamp.

"Beauchamp, my good fellow, you know I am starving," said Debray. "Do not set him off on some long story."

"Well, I do not prevent your sitting down to table," replied Beauchamp; "Château-Renaud can tell us while we eat our breakfast."

"Gentlemen," said Morcerf, "it is only a quarter past ten, and I expect some one else."

"Ah, true! a diplomatist!" observed Debray.

"I know not whether he be or not; I only know that I gave him a mission which he terminated so entirely to my satisfaction that had I been king I should have instantly created him knight of all my orders, even had I been able to offer him the Golden Fleece and the Garter."

"Well, since we are not to sit down to table," said Debray, "take a glass of sherry, and tell us all about it."

"You all know that I had the fancy of going to Africa."

"It is a road your ancestors have traced for you," said Albert, gallantly.

"Yes, but I doubt that your object was like theirs, — to rescue the Holy Sepulchre."

"You are quite right, Beauchamp," observed the young aristocrat. "It was only to fight as an amateur. I cannot bear duelling ever since two seconds, whom I had chosen to accommodate a quarrel, forced me to break the arm of one of my best friends, one whom you all know, — poor Franz d'Épinay."

"Ah, true!" said Debray, "you did fight some time ago; about what?"

"The devil take me, if I remember!" returned Château-Renaud. "But I recollect perfectly one thing, — that being unwilling to let such talents as mine sleep, I wished to try upon the Arabs the new pistols that had been given to me. In consequence I embarked for Oran, and went from thence to Constantine, where I arrived just in time to witness the raising of the siege. I retreated with the rest. For forty-eight hours I supported the rain during the day and the cold during the night tolerably well; but the third morning my horse died of cold. Poor brute! accustomed to be covered up and to have a stove in the stable, the Arabian finds himself unable to bear ten degrees of cold in Arabia."

"That's why you want to purchase my English horse," said Debray; "you think he will support the cold better."

"You are mistaken, for I have made a vow never to return to Africa."

"You were very much frightened, then?" inquired Beauchamp.

"I confess it; and I had good reason to be so," replied Château-Renaud. "I was retreating on foot, for my horse

was dead. Six Arabs came up, full gallop, to cut off my head. I shot two with my double-barrelled gun, and two more with my pistols; but I was then disarmed, and two were still left. One seized me by the hair (that is why I now wear it so short, for no one knows what may happen), the other encircled my neck with the yataghan, when this gentleman whom you see here charged them, shot the one who held me by the hair with a pistol, and cleft the skull of the other with his sabre. He had assigned himself the task of saving the life of a man that day; chance caused that man to be myself. When I am rich I will order from Klagmann or Marochetti a statue of Chance."

"Yes," said Morrel, smiling, "it was the 5th of September, — the anniversary of the day on which my father was miraculously preserved; therefore, as far as it lies in my power, I endeavor to celebrate it every year by some action."

"Heroic, is it not?" interrupted Château-Renaud. "In brief, I was the chosen one; but that is not all. After rescuing me from the sword he rescued me from the cold, not by sharing his cloak with me, like Saint Martin, but by giving it all to me; then from hunger by sharing with me — guess what?"

"A Strasbourg pie?" asked Beauchamp.

"No, his horse; of which we each of us ate a slice with a hearty appetite. It was very hard."

"The horse?" said Morcerf, laughing.

"No, the sacrifice," returned Château-Renaud; "ask Debray if he would sacrifice his English steed for a stranger?"

"Not for a stranger," said Debray; "but for a friend I might perhaps."

"I divined that you would become mine, Monsieur the

Baron," replied Morrel; "besides, as I had the honor to tell you, heroism or not, sacrifice or not, that day I owed an offering to bad fortune in recompense for the favors good fortune had on other days granted to us."

"The history to which M. Morrel alludes," continued Château-Renaud, "is an admirable one, which he will tell you some day when you are better acquainted with him; to-day let us fill our stomachs and not our memories. What time do you breakfast, Albert?"

"At half-past ten."

"Precisely?" asked Debray, taking out his watch.

"Oh! you will give me five minutes' grace," replied Morcerf, "for I also expect a preserver."

"Of whom?"

"Of myself, to be sure!" cried Morcerf; "do you think I cannot be saved as well as any one else, and that there are only Arabs who cut off heads? Our breakfast is a philanthropic one, and we shall have at table — at least, I hope so — two benefactors of humanity."

"What shall we do?" said Debray; "we have only one Monthyon prize."

"Well, it will be given to some one who has done nothing to deserve it," said Beauchamp; "that is the way the Academy usually escapes from the dilemma."

"And where does he come from?" asked Debray. "You have already answered the question once, but so vaguely that I venture to put it a second time."

"Really," said Albert, "I do not know; when I invited him three months ago, he was then at Rome, but since that time, who knows where he may have gone?"

"And you think him capable of being here punctually?" demanded Debray.

"I think him capable of everything."

"Well, with the five minutes' grace, we have only ten left."

"I will profit by them to tell you something about my guest."

"I beg pardon!" interrupted Beauchamp; "are there any materials for an article in what you are going to tell us?"

"Yes, and for a most curious one."

"Go on, then, for I see I shall not get to the Chamber this morning, and I must make up for it."

"I was at Rome during the last Carnival."

"We know that," said Beauchamp.

"Yes; but what you do not know is that I was carried off by bandits."

"There are no bandits," cried Debray.

"Yes, there are, and most hideous, or rather most admirable ones, for I found them ugly enough to frighten me."

"Come, my dear Albert," said Debray, "confess that your cook is behindhand, that the oysters have not arrived from Ostend or Marennes, and that, like Madame de Maintenon, you are going to replace the dish by a story. Say so at once; we are sufficiently well-bred to excuse you, and to listen to your story, fabulous as it promises to be."

"And I say to you that fabulous as it may seem, I give it to you as a true one from beginning to end. The brigands had carried me off and conducted me to a most gloomy spot, called the catacombs of St. Sebastian."

"I know it," said Château-Renaud; "I narrowly escaped catching a fever there."

"And I did more than that," replied Morcerf, "for I caught one. I was informed that I was a prisoner until I paid the sum of four thousand Roman crowns, — about twenty-four thousand livres. Unfortunately, I had not above fifteen hundred. I was at the end of my journey

and of my credit. I wrote to Franz — and were he here he would confirm every word — I wrote to Franz that if he did not come with the four thousand crowns before six, at ten minutes past I should have gone to join the blessed saints and glorious martyrs in whose company I had the honor of being; and Signor Luigi Vampa — that was the name of the chief of these bandits — would have scrupulously kept his word."

"But Franz came with the four thousand crowns," said Château-Renaud. "The devil! A man whose name is Franz d'Épinay or Albert de Morcerf has n't much trouble to get four thousand crowns."

"No, he arrived accompanied simply by the guest I am going to present to you."

"Ah! this gentleman is a Hercules killing Cacus, a Perseus freeing Andromeda?"

"No, he is a man of about my own size."

"Armed to the teeth?"

"He had not even a knitting-needle."

"But he paid your ransom?"

"He said two words to the chief, and I was free."

"And they apologized to him for having carried you off?" said Beauchamp.

"Just so."

"Why, he is a second Ariosto."

"No; he is simply the Count of Monte Cristo."

"There is no Count of Monte Cristo," said Debray.

"I do not think there is," added Château-Renaud, with the air of a man who knows the whole of the European nobility perfectly. "Does any one know anything of a Count of Monte Cristo?"

"He comes possibly from the Holy Land, and one of his ancestors possessed Calvary, as the Montemarts did the Dead Sea."

"I think I can assist your researches," said Maximilian. "Monte Cristo is a little island I have often heard spoken of by the old sailors my father employed, — a grain of sand in the centre of the Mediterranean, an atom in the infinite."

"Precisely!" cried Albert. "Well, he of whom I speak is the lord and master of this grain of sand, of this atom; he has purchased the title of count somewhere in Tuscany."

"He is rich, then?

"I believe so."

"But that ought to be visible."

"That is what deceives you, Debray."

"I do not understand you."

"Have you read the 'Arabian Nights'?"

"What a question!"

"Well, do you know if the persons you see there are rich or poor, if their grains of wheat are not rubies or diamonds? They seem like poor fishermen, and suddenly they open some mysterious cavern filled with the wealth of the Indies."

"Well?"

"My Count of Monte Cristo is one of those fishermen. He has even a name taken from the book; he calls himself Sinbad the Sailor, and has a cave filled with gold."

"And you have seen this cavern, Morcerf?" asked Beauchamp.

"No, but Franz has; for Heaven's sake, not a word of this before him! Franz went in with his eyes blindfolded, and was served by mutes and women to whom Cleopatra was nothing. Only he is not quite sure about the women, for they did not come in until after he had taken some hashish, so that what he took for women might have been simply a row of statues."

The two young men looked at Morcerf as if to say, "Are you mad, or are you laughing at us?"

"And I also," said Morrel, thoughtfully, "have heard something like this from an old sailor named Penelon."

"Ah!" cried Albert, "it is very lucky that M. Morrel comes to aid me; you are vexed, are you not, that he thus gives a clew to the labyrinth?"

"My dear Albert," said Debray, "what you tell us is so extraordinary."

"Ah! because your ambassadors and your consuls do not tell you of them. They have no time; they must molest their countrymen who travel."

"Now you get angry, and attack our poor agents. How will you have them protect you? The Chamber cuts down their salaries every day, so that now they have scarcely any. Will you be ambassador, Albert? I will send you to Constantinople."

"No, lest on the first demonstration I make in favor of Mehemet Ali, the Sultan send me the bowstring, and make my secretaries strangle me."

"There, now!" said Debray.

"Yes, but this does not prevent the Count of Monte Cristo from existing."

"*Pardieu!* every one exists."

"Doubtless, but not in the same way; every one has not black slaves, superb galleys, arms like those at La Casauba, Arabian horses, and Greek mistresses."

"Have you seen the Greek mistress?"

"I have both seen and heard her. I saw her at the theatre, and heard her one morning when I breakfasted with the count."

"Your extraordinary man eats, then?"

"Yes; but so little, it can hardly be called eating."

"He must be a vampire."

"Laugh if you will; that was the opinion of the Comtesse G——, who, as you are aware, knew Lord Ruthven."

"Ah, capital!" said Beauchamp. "For a man not connected with newspapers, here is the pendant to the famous sea-serpent of the 'Constitutionnel.'"

"Wild eyes, the iris of which contracts or dilates at pleasure," said Debray; "facial angle strongly developed; magnificent forehead; livid complexion; black beard; sharp and white teeth; politeness unexceptionable."

"Just so, Lucien," returned Morcerf; "you have described him, feature for feature. Yes, keen and cutting politeness. This man has often made me shudder! and one day when we were viewing an execution I thought I should faint, more from hearing the cold and calm manner in which he spoke of every description of torture than from the sight of the executioner and the culprit."

"Did he not conduct you to the ruins of the Colosseum to suck your blood?" asked Beauchamp.

"Or, after having delivered you, did he not make you sign a flame-colored parchment by which you yielded your soul to him, as Esau sold his birthright?"

"Rail on, rail on at your ease, gentlemen!" said Morcerf, somewhat piqued. "When I look at you Parisians, idlers on the Boulevard de Gand or the Bois de Boulogne, and think of this man, it seems to me we are not of the same race."

"I am highly flattered," returned Beauchamp.

"At the same time," added Château-Renaud, "your Count of Monte Cristo is a very fine fellow, always excepting his little arrangements with the Italian banditti."

"There are no Italian banditti!" said Debray.

"There are no vampires!" cried Beauchamp.

"There is no Count of Monte Cristo!" added Debray. "There is half-past ten striking, Albert!"

"Confess you have dreamed this, and let us sit down to breakfast," continued Beauchamp. But the sound of the clock had not died away when Germain announced, "His Excellency the Count of Monte Cristo." The involuntary start every one gave proved how much Morcerf's narrative had impressed them, and Albert himself could not prevent himself from feeling a sudden emotion. He had not heard a carriage stop in the street, or steps in the ante-chamber; the door had itself opened noiselessly. The count appeared, dressed with the greatest simplicity; but the most fastidious dandy could have found nothing to cavil at in his toilet. Every article of dress — hat, coat, gloves, and boots — was from the first makers. He seemed scarcely five and thirty. But what struck everybody was his extreme resemblance to the portrait Debray had drawn. The count advanced, smiling, into the centre of the room, and approached Albert, who hastened towards him, holding out his hand. "Punctuality," said Monte Cristo, "is the politeness of kings, according to one of your sovereigns, I think; but it is not that of travellers, however they may wish. But I hope you will excuse the two or three seconds I am behindhand; five hundred leagues are not to be accomplished without some trouble, and especially in France, where it seems it is forbidden to beat the postilions."

"Monsieur the Count," replied Albert, "I was announcing your visit to some of my friends, whom I had invited in consequence of the promise you did me the honor to make, and whom I now present to you. They are M. le Comte de Château-Renaud, whose nobility goes back to the twelve peers, and whose ancestors had a place at the Round Table; M. Lucien Debray, private secretary to the Ministre de l'Intérieur; M. Beauchamp, an editor of a paper, and the terror of the French Government, but

of whom, in spite of his celebrity, you have not heard in Italy, since his paper is prohibited there; and M. Maximilian Morrel, captain of Spahis."

At this name the count, who had hitherto saluted every one with courtesy, but at the same time with a coldness and formality quite English, made in spite of himself a step forward, and a slight tinge of red colored his pale cheeks. "You wear the uniform of the new French conquerors, Monsieur," said he; "it is a handsome uniform." No one could have said what caused the count's voice to vibrate so deeply, and what made his eye flash, which was in general so calm and so clear, when he had no motive for veiling its expression.

"You have never seen our Africans, Monsieur the Count?" said Albert.

"Never," replied the count, who was by this time perfectly master of himself again.

"Well, beneath this uniform beats one of the bravest and noblest hearts in the whole army."

"Oh, M. de Morcerf!" interrupted Morrel.

"Let me go on, Captain! And we have just heard," continued Albert, "of a recent action of Monsieur, and one so heroic that although I have seen him to-day for the first time, I request you to allow me to introduce him as my friend."

At these words it was still possible to remark in Monte Cristo that fixed gaze, that passing color, and that slight trembling of the eyelid which with him betrayed emotion.

"Ah! you have a noble heart?" said the count; "so much the better."

This exclamation, which answered to the count's own thought rather than to what Albert was saying, surprised everybody, and especially Morrel, who looked at Monte Cristo with surprise. But at the same time the intona-

tion was so soft that however strange the exclamation might seem, it was impossible to be offended at it.

"Why, then, should he doubt it?" said Beauchamp to Château-Renaud.

"In fact," replied the latter, who with his aristocratic glance and his knowledge of the world had penetrated at once all that was penetrable in Monte Cristo, "Albert has not deceived us; the count is a singular being. What say you, Morrel?"

"*Ma foi!* he has an open look about him that pleases me, in spite of the singular remark he has made about me."

"Gentlemen," said Albert, "Germain informs me that breakfast is ready. My dear count, allow me to show you the way."

They passed silently into the breakfast-room; every one took his place.

"Gentlemen," said the count, seating himself, "permit me to make a confession which must form my excuse for any unconventionalities of which I may be guilty. I am a stranger, and a stranger to such a degree that this is the first time I have ever been in Paris. The French way of living is utterly unknown to me, and up to the present time I have followed the Eastern customs, which are entirely in contrast to the Parisian. I beg you, therefore, to excuse me if you find anything in me too Turkish, too Italian, or too Arabian. Now, then, gentlemen, let us breakfast."

"With what an air he says all this!" muttered Beauchamp; "decidedly he is a great man."

"A great man in his country," added Debray.

"A great man in every country, M. Debray," said Château-Renaud.

CHAPTER III.

THE BREAKFAST.

THE count was, it may be remembered, a most temperate guest. Albert remarked this, expressing his fears lest at the outset the Parisian mode of life should displease the traveller in the most essential point.

"My dear count," said he, "I fear that the fare of the Rue du Helder is not so much to your taste as that of the Place d'Espagne. I ought to have consulted you on the point, and have had some dishes prepared expressly to suit your taste."

"Did you know me better," returned the count, smiling, "you would not give one thought of such a thing for a traveller like myself, who has successively lived on macaroni at Naples, polenta at Milan, olla podrida at Valencia, pilau at Constantinople, karrick in India, and swallows' nests in China. I eat everywhere, and of everything, — only I eat but little; and this day, on which you reproach me for abstinence, is my day of appetite, for I have not eaten since yesterday morning."

"What!" cried all the guests, "you have not eaten for four and twenty hours?"

"No," replied the count; "I was forced to go out of my road to obtain some information near Nîmes, so that I was somewhat late, and I did not choose to stop."

"And you ate in your carriage?" asked Morcerf.

"No; I slept, as I generally do when I am weary

without having the courage to amuse myself, or when I am hungry without feeling inclined to eat."

"But you can sleep when you please, Monsieur?" said Morrel.

"Very nearly."

"You have a receipt for that?"

"An infallible one."

"That would be invaluable to us in Africa, who have not always food to eat, and rarely anything to drink."

"Yes," said Monte Cristo; "but unfortunately my receipt, excellent for a man like myself, who leads an exceptional life, would be very dangerous applied to an army, which might not awake when it was needed."

"May we inquire what is this receipt?" asked Debray.

"Oh, yes," returned Monte Cristo; "I make no secret of it. It is a mixture of excellent opium, which I brought myself from Canton in order to have it pure, and the best hashish which grows in the East, — that is, between the Tigris and the Euphrates. These two ingredients are mixed in equal proportions and formed into pills. Ten minutes after one is taken, the effect is produced. Ask M. le Baron Franz d'Épinay; I think he tasted them one day."

"Yes," replied Morcerf, "he said something about it to me."

"But," said Beauchamp, who in his capacity of journalist was very incredulous, "you always carry this drug about you?"

"Always."

"Would it be an indiscretion to ask to see those precious pills?" continued Beauchamp, hoping to take him at a disadvantage.

"No, Monsieur," returned the count; and he drew from his pocket a marvellous *bonbonnière*, formed out of

a single emerald, and closed by a golden lid, which unscrewed and gave passage to a small ball of a greenish color, and about the size of a pea. This ball had an acrid and penetrating odor. There were four or five more in the emerald, which would contain about a dozen. The *bonbonnière* passed round the table; but it was more to examine the admirable emerald than to see the pills that the guests handed it around.

"And is it your cook who prepares these pills?" asked Beauchamp.

"Oh, no, Monsieur," replied Monte Cristo; "I do not thus intrust my real enjoyments to the discretion of the incapable. I am a tolerable chemist, and prepare my pills myself."

"This is a magnificent emerald, and the largest I have ever seen," said Château-Renaud, "although my mother has some remarkable family jewels."

"I had three similar ones," returned Monte Cristo. "I gave one to the Grand Seigneur, who mounted it in his sabre; another to our Holy Father the Pope, who had it set in his tiara opposite to one nearly as large, though not so fine, given by the Emperor Napoleon to his predecessor, Pius VII. I kept the third for myself, and I had it hollowed out, which reduced its value, but rendered it more commodious for the purpose I intended it for."

Every one looked at Monte Cristo with astonishment; he spoke with so much simplicity that it was evident he spoke the truth or that he was mad. However, the sight of the emerald made them naturally incline to the former belief.

"And what did these two sovereigns give you in exchange for these magnificent presents?" asked Debray.

"The Grand Seigneur, the liberty of a woman," replied

the count; "the Pope, the life of a man, — so that once in my life I have been as powerful as if Heaven had made me come into the world on the steps of a throne."

"And it was Peppino you saved, was it not?" cried Morcerf; "it was for him that you obtained pardon?"

"Perhaps," returned the count, smiling.

"Monsieur the Count, you have no idea what pleasure it gives me to hear you speak thus," said Morcerf. "I had announced you beforehand to my friends as an enchanter of the 'Arabian Nights,' a wizard of the Middle Ages; but the Parisians are so subtle in paradoxes that they mistake for caprices of the imagination the most incontestable truths, when these truths do not form a part of their daily existence. For example, here is Debray who reads, and Beauchamp who prints every day that a member of the Jockey Club has been stopped and robbed on the Boulevard; that four persons have been assassinated in the Rue St. Denis or the Faubourg St. Germain; that ten, fifteen, or twenty thieves have been arrested in a café on the Boulevard du Temple, or in the Thermes de Julien, — and who yet contest the existence of the bandits of the Maremma, of the Campagna di Romana, or the Pontine Marshes. Tell them yourself that I was taken by bandits, and that without your generous intercession I should now have been sleeping in the catacombs of St. Sebastian, instead of receiving them in my humble abode in the Rue du Helder."

"Bah," said Monte Cristo, "you promised me never to speak of that misfortune."

"It was not I who made that promise," cried Morcerf; "it must have been some one else whom you have rescued in the same manner, and whom you have forgotten. Pray speak of it, for if you decide to relate that event you will

[illegible] things that I already know,

but will also acquaint me with much of which I am still in ignorance."

"It seems to me," returned the count, smiling, "that you played a sufficiently important part to know as well as myself what happened."

"Well, you promise me, if I tell all I know, to relate in your turn all that I do not know?"

"That is but fair," replied Monte Cristo.

"Well," said Morcerf, "for three days I believed myself the object of the attentions of a mask whom I took for a descendant of Tullia or Poppœa, while I was simply the object of the attentions of a *contadine*, and I say *contadine* to avoid saying peasant. What I know is that like a fool, a greater fool than he of whom I spoke just now, I mistook for this peasant a young bandit of fifteen or sixteen, with a beardless chin and slim waist, and who just as I was about to imprint a chaste salute on his lips placed a pistol to my head, and aided by seven or eight others, led, or rather dragged me, to the catacombs of St. Sebastian, where I found a highly educated chief of brigands perusing 'Cæsar's Commentaries,' and who deigned to leave off reading to inform me that unless the next morning before six o'clock I should have contributed to his money-box four thousand piastres, at a quarter past six I should cease to exist. The letter is still to be seen, for it is in Franz d'Épinay's possession, signed by me, and with a postscript of M. Luigi Vampa. This is all I know; but I know not, Monsieur the Count, how you contrived to inspire with such respect the bandits of Rome, who respect so few. I assure you, Franz and I were lost in admiration."

"Nothing more simple," returned the count. "I had known the famous Vampa for more than ten years. When he was quite a child, and only a shepherd, I gave him,

for having shown me the way to a place, some pieces of gold; he, in order to repay me, gave me a poniard, the hilt of which he had carved with his own hand, and which you may have seen in my collection of arms. In after years, whether he had forgotten this interchange of presents, which ought to have cemented our friendship, or whether he did not recollect me, he sought to take me; but on the contrary it was I who captured him and a dozen of his band. I might have handed him over to Roman justice, which is somewhat expeditious, and which would have been especially so with him; but I did nothing of the sort, — I suffered him and his band to depart."

"On the condition that they should sin no more," said Beauchamp, laughing. "I see with pleasure that they have scrupulously kept their word."

"No, Monsieur," returned Monte Cristo; "upon the simple condition that they should respect myself and my friends. Perhaps what I am about to say may seem strange to you who are socialists, and vaunt humanity and your duty to your neighbor; but I never seek to protect society, which does not protect me, and which I will even say generally occupies itself about me only to injure me; and thus while I give them a low place in my esteem, and preserve a neutrality towards them, it is society and my neighbor who are indebted to me."

"Bravo!" cried Château-Renaud; "you are the first man I ever met sufficiently courageous to preach egotism pure and simple. Bravo, Monsieur the Count, bravo!"

"It is frank, at least," said Morrel. "But I am sure that Monsieur the Count does not regret having once deviated from the principles he has so boldly avowed."

"How have I deviated from those principles, Monsieur?" asked Monte Cristo, who could not help looking at Morrel with so much intensity that two or three times the young

man had been unable to sustain the clear and piercing eye of the count.

"Why, it seems to me," replied Morrel, "that in delivering M. de Morcerf, whom you did not know, you did good to your neighbor and to society."

"Of which he is the brightest ornament," said Beauchamp, drinking off a glass of champagne.

"Monsieur the Count," cried Morcerf, "you are at fault, — you, one of the most formidable logicians I know; and you must see it clearly proved that instead of being an egotist, you are a philanthropist. Ah! you call yourself Oriental, a Levantine, Maltese, Indian, Chinese; your family name is Monte Cristo; Sinbad the Sailor is your baptismal appellation; and yet the first day you set foot in Paris you instinctively possess the greatest virtue, or rather the chief defect of us eccentric Parisians, — that is, you assume the vices you have not, and conceal the virtues you possess."

"My dear viscount," returned Monte Cristo, "I do not see in all I have done anything that merits, either from you or these gentlemen, the pretended eulogies I have received. You are no stranger to me, for I was acquainted with you: I had given up two rooms to you; I had invited you to breakfast with me; I had lent you one of my carriages; we had witnessed the Carnival together; and we had also seen from a window of the Place del Popolo the execution that affected you so much that you nearly fainted. I will appeal to any of these gentlemen; could I leave my guest in the hands of a hideous bandit, as you term him? Besides, you know, I had the idea that you could introduce me into some of the Paris salons when I came to France. You have sometimes perhaps looked upon this resolution as a vague and fugitive project, but to-day you see it is a solid reality, to

which you must submit under penalty of breaking your word."

"I will keep it," returned Morcerf; "but I fear that you will be much disappointed, accustomed as you are to picturesque events and fantastic horizons. Among us you will not meet with any of those episodes with which your adventurous existence has so familiarized you. Our Chimborazo is Montmartre; our Himalaya is Mount Valérien; our Great Desert is the Plain of Grenelle, where they are now boring an Artesian well to water the caravans. We have plenty of thieves, though not so many as reported; but these thieves stand in far more dread of a policeman than a lord. France is so prosaic, and Paris so civilized a city, that you will not find in its eighty-five departments.—I say eighty-five, because I do not include Corsica — you will not find, then, in these eighty-five departments a single hill on which there is not a telegraph, or a grotto in which the commissary of police has not put up a gas-lamp. There is but one service I can render you, and for that I place myself entirely at your orders; that is, to present, or make my friends present you everywhere. Besides, you have no need of any one to introduce you, — with your name and your fortune and your talent" (Monte Cristo bowed with a somewhat ironical smile) "you can present yourself everywhere, and be well received. I can be useful in one way only: if knowledge of Parisian habits, of the means of rendering yourself comfortable, or of the bazaars, can assist, you may dispose of me to find you a suitable residence. I dare not offer to share my apartments with you as I shared yours at Rome — I, who do not profess egotism, but am yet egotistical *par excellence*, — for except myself, these rooms would not contain a sh[illegible]ow of a woman."

[illegible] conjugal reserva-

tion; I recollect that at Rome you said something of a projected marriage. May I congratulate you?"

"The affair is still only a project."

"And he who says 'project' means certainty," said Debray.

"No," replied Morcerf, "my father is most anxious about it; and I hope ere long to introduce you, if not to my wife, at least to my intended, — Mademoiselle Eugénie Danglars."

"Eugénie Danglars!" said Monte Cristo; "tell me, is not her father M. le Baron Danglars?"

"Yes," returned Morcerf; "a baron of recent creation."

"What matter," said Monte Cristo, "if he has rendered the State services which merit this distinction?"

"Enormous services," answered Beauchamp. "Although in reality a Liberal, he negotiated a loan of six millions for Charles X. in 1829, who made him a baron and chevalier of the Legion of Honor; so that he carries the ribbon, not, as you would think, in his waistcoat-pocket, but at his button-hole."

"Ah!" interrupted Morcerf, laughing, "Beauchamp, Beauchamp, keep that for the 'Charivari,' but spare my future father-in-law in my presence." Then, turning to Monte Cristo, "You just now pronounced his name as if you knew the baron?"

"I do not know him," returned Monte Cristo; "but I shall probably soon make his acquaintance, for I have a credit opened with him by the house of Richard and Blount of London, Arstein and Eskeles of Vienna, and Thomson and French at Rome."

As he pronounced the last two names the count glanced at Maximilian Morrel. If the stranger expected to produce an effect on Morrel he was not mistaken; Maximilian

started as if he had received an electric shock. "Thomson and French!" said he; "do you know that house, Monsieur?"

"They are my bankers in the capital of the Christian world," returned the count, quietly. "Can my influence with them be of any service to you?"

"Oh, Monsieur the Count, you could assist me perhaps in researches which have been up to the present fruitless. That house in past years did ours a great service, and has, I know not for what reason, always denied having rendered us this service."

"I shall be at your orders," said Monte Cristo, inclining himself.

"But," continued Morcerf, "*à propos* of Danglars, we have strangely wandered from the subject. We were speaking of a suitable habitation for the Count of Monte Cristo. Come, gentlemen, let us all propose some place; where shall we lodge this new guest in our great capital?"

"Faubourg St. Germain," said Château-Renaud. "The count will find there a charming hotel, with a court and garden."

"Bah! Château-Renaud," returned Debray, "you know only your dull and gloomy Faubourg St. Germain. Do not pay any attention to him, Monsieur the Count; live in the Chaussée d'Antin, — that's the real centre of Paris."

"Boulevard de l'Opéra," said Beauchamp; "on the first floor, a house with a balcony. Monsieur the Count will have his cushions of silver cloth brought there, and as he smokes his chibouque see all Paris pass before him."

"You have no idea, then, Morrel?" asked Château-Renaud; "you do not propose anything?"

"Oh, yes," returned the young man, smiling; "on the contrary, I have one; but I expected the count would be

tempted by one of the brilliant proposals made him; yet as he has not replied to any of them I will venture to offer him a suite of apartments in a charming hotel, in the Pompadour style, that my sister has inhabited for a year, in the Rue Meslay."

"You have a sister?" asked the count.

"Yes, Monsieur, a most excellent sister."

"Married?"

"Nearly nine years."

"Happy?" asked the count again.

"As happy as it is permitted to a human creature to be," replied Maximilian. "She married the man she loved, who remained faithful to us in our fallen fortunes, — Emmanuel Herbaut." Monte Cristo smiled imperceptibly. "I live there during my leave of absence," continued Maximilian; "and I shall be, together with my brother-in-law Emmanuel, at the disposition of Monsieur the Count whenever he thinks fit to honor us."

"One minute!" cried Albert, without giving Monte Cristo the time to reply. "Take care; you are going to shut up a traveller, — Sinbad the Sailor, a man who comes to see Paris, — to the routine of family life. You are going to make a patriarch of him."

"Oh, no," said Morrel; "my sister is five and twenty, my brother-in-law is thirty. They are gay, young, and happy. Besides, Monsieur the Count will be in his own house, and only see them when he thinks fit to do so."

"Thanks, Monsieur," said Monte Cristo. "I shall content myself with being presented to your sister and her husband, if you will do me the honor to introduce me; but I cannot accept the offer of any one of these gentlemen, since my habitation is already prepared."

"What!" cried Morcerf; "you are then going to a hotel; that will be very dull for you."

"Was I so badly lodged at Rome?" said Monte Cristo, smiling.

"*Parbleu!* at Rome you spent fifty thousand piastres in furnishing your apartments; but I presume that you are not disposed to spend a similar sum every day."

"It is not that which deterred me," replied Monte Cristo; "but as I determined to have a house to myself, I sent on my *valet de chambre*, and he ought by this time to have bought the house and furnished it."

"But you have, then, a *valet de chambre* who knows Paris?" said Beauchamp.

"It is the first time he has ever been in Paris. He is black, and cannot speak," returned Monte Cristo.

"It is Ali!" cried Albert, in the midst of the general surprise.

"Yes; Ali himself, my Nubian mute, whom you saw, I think, at Rome."

"Certainly," said Morcerf; "I recollect him perfectly. But how could you charge a Nubian to purchase a house, and a mute to furnish it? he will have done everything wrong, poor fellow."

"Undeceive yourself, Monsieur," replied Monte Cristo; "I am quite sure that on the contrary he will have chosen everything as I wish. He knows my tastes, my caprices, my wants; he has been here a week, with the instinct of a hound, hunting by himself; he will have arranged everything to suit me. He knew I should arrive to-day at ten o'clock; since nine he awaited me at the Barrière de Fontainbleau. He gave me this paper; it contains the number of my new abode. Read it yourself," and Monte Cristo passed a paper to Albert.

"Ah, that is really original," said Beauchamp.

"An[illegible]d Château-Renaud.

[illegible]?" asked Debray.

"No," said Monte Cristo; "I told you I did not wish to be behind my time; I dressed myself in the carriage, and descended at the viscount's door."

The young men looked at each other. They did not know whether it was a comedy Monte Cristo was playing, but every word he uttered had such an air of simplicity that it was impossible to suppose that what he said was false; besides, why should he tell a falsehood?

"We must content ourselves, then," said Beauchamp, "with rendering Monsieur the Count all the little services in our power. I, in my quality of journalist, open all the theatres to him."

"Thanks, Monsieur," returned Monte Cristo; "my steward has orders to take a box at each theatre."

"Is your steward also a Nubian?" asked Debray.

"No, he is a countryman of yours, if a Corsican is a countryman of any one's. But you know him, M. de Morcerf."

"Is it that excellent M. Bertuccio, who understands hiring windows so well?"

"Yes; you saw him the day I had the honor of receiving you. He has been a soldier, a smuggler, — in fact, everything. I would not be quite sure that he has not been involved with the police for some trifle, — a stab with a knife, for instance."

"And you have chosen this honest citizen for your steward," said Debray. "Of how much does he rob you every year?"

"On my word," replied the count, "not more than another, I am sure. He answers my purpose, knows no impossibility, and so I keep him."

"Then," continued Château-Renaud, "since you have blishment, a steward, and a hotel in the Champs you want nothing more but a mistress."

Albert smiled. He thought of the fair Greek he had seen in the count's box at the Argentina and Valle theatres.

"I have something better than that," said Monte Cristo; "I have a slave. You procure your mistresses from the Opera, the Vaudeville, or the Variétés; I purchased mine at Constantinople. It cost me more, but I have nothing to fear."

"But you forget," replied Debray, laughing, "that we are Franks by name and frank by nature, as King Charles said; and that the moment she puts her foot in France your slave becomes free."

"Who will tell her?"

"The first person who sees her."

"She speaks only Romaic."

"That is another thing."

"But at least we shall see her," said Beauchamp; "or do you keep eunuchs as well as mutes?"

"Oh, no," replied Monte Cristo; "I do not carry Orientalism so far. Every one about me is free to quit me, and when he leaves me will no longer have any need of me or any one else; it is for that reason, perhaps, that they do not quit me."

They had long since passed to dessert and cigars.

"My dear Albert," said Debray, rising, "it is half-past two. Your guest is charming; but there is no company so good but that one must leave it, and sometimes for bad company. I must return to the minister's. I will tell him of the count, and we shall soon know who he is."

"Take care," returned Albert; "no one has been able to accomplish that."

"Oh, we have three millions for our police. It is true they are almost always spent beforehand; but no matter, we shall still have fifty thousand livres to spend for this purpose."

"And when you know, will you tell me?"

"I promise you. *Au revoir*, Albert. Gentlemen, good-morning."

As he left the room, Debray called out loudly, "My carriage!"

"Bravo!" said Beauchamp to Albert; "I shall not go to the Chamber, but I have something better to offer my readers than a speech of M. Danglars."

"For Heaven's sake, Beauchamp," returned Morcerf, "not a word, I beg of you; do not deprive me of the merit of introducing him and explaining him. Is he not peculiar?"

"He is more than that," replied Château-Renaud; "he is one of the most extraordinary men I ever saw in my life. Are you coming, Morrel?"

"As soon as I have given my card to Monsieur the Count, who has promised to pay us a visit at Rue Meslay, No. 14."

"Be sure I shall not fail to do so," returned the count, bowing. And Maximilian Morrel left the room with the Baron de Château-Renaud, leaving Monte Cristo alone with Morcerf.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PRESENTATION.

When Albert found himself alone with Monte Cristo, "Monsieur the Count," said he, "allow me to commence my ciceroneship by showing you a specimen of a bachelor's apartments. You, who are accustomed to the palaces of Italy, can amuse yourself by calculating in how many square feet a young man who is not the worst lodged in Paris can live. As we pass from one room to another, I will open the windows to let you breathe."

Monte Cristo had already seen the breakfast-room and the salon on the ground-floor. Albert led him first to his studio, which was, as we have said, his favorite apartment. Monte Cristo was a worthy appreciator of all that Albert had collected here; old cabinets, Japan porcelain, Oriental stuffs, Venice glass, arms from all parts of the world, — everything was familiar to him, and at the first glance he recognized their date, their country, and their origin. Morcerf had expected he should be the guide; on the contrary, it was he who under the count's guidance followed a course of archæology, mineralogy, and natural history. They descended to the first floor; Albert led his guest into the salon. The salon was filled with the works of modern artists; there were landscapes by Dupré, with their long reeds and tall trees, their lowing oxen and marvellous skies; Delacroix's Arabian cavaliers, with their long white burnooses, their shining belts, their damaskeened arms, their h[illegible] h[illegible] other with their teeth

while their riders contended fiercely with their maces; *aquarelles* of Boulanger, representing Notre Dame de Paris with that vigor that makes the artist the rival of the poet; there were paintings by Dias, who makes his flowers more beautiful than flowers, his suns more brilliant than the sun; designs by Decamps, as vividly colored as those of Salvator Rosa, but more poetic; pastels by Giraud and Müller, representing children like angels, and women with the features of virgins; sketches torn from the album of Dauzat's "Travels in the East," that had been made in a few seconds on the saddle of a camel, or beneath the dome of a mosque, — in a word, all that modern art can give in exchange and as recompense for the art lost and gone with ages long since past.

Albert expected to have something new this time to show to the traveller, but to his great surprise the latter, without seeking for the signatures, many of which indeed were only initials, named instantly the author of every picture in such a manner that it was easy to see that each name was not only known to him, but that the style of each had been appreciated and studied by him. From the salon they passed into the bedchamber; it was a model of taste and simple elegance. A single portrait, signed "Léopold Robert," shone in its carved and gilded frame. This portrait attracted the Count of Monte Cristo's attention, for he made three rapid steps in the chamber, and stopped suddenly before it. It was the portrait of a young woman twenty-five or twenty-six years old, with a dark complexion, and light and lustrous eyes, veiled beneath their long lashes. She wore the picturesque costume of the Catalan fisherwomen, — a red and black bodice, and the golden pins in her hair. She was looking at the sea, and her shadow was defined on the blue ocean and sky. The light was so faint in the room that Albert did

not perceive the paleness that spread itself over the count's visage, or the nervous heaving of his chest and shoulders. Silence prevailed for an instant, during which Monte Cristo gazed intently on the picture.

"You have there a most charming mistress, Viscount," said the count, in a perfectly calm tone; "and this costume — a ball costume, doubtless — becomes her most admirably."

"Ah, Monsieur!" returned Albert, "I would never forgive you this mistake if you had seen another picture beside this. You do not know my mother. She it is whom you see here; she had her portrait painted thus six or eight years ago. This costume is a fancy one, it appears, and the resemblance is so great that I think I still see my mother the same as she was in 1830. The countess had this portrait painted during the count's absence. She doubtless intended giving him an agreeable surprise; but strange to say, this portrait seemed to displease my father, and the value of the picture, which is, as you see, one of the best works of Léopold Robert, could not overcome his dislike to it. It is true, between ourselves, that M. de Morcerf is one of the most assiduous peers at the Luxembourg, a general renowned for theory, but a most mediocre amateur of art. It is different with my mother, who paints exceedingly well, and who, unwilling to part with so valuable a picture, gave it to me to put here, where it would be less likely to displease M. de Morcerf, whose portrait, by Gros, I will also show you. Excuse my talking of family matters; but as I shall have the honor of introducing you to the count, I tell you this to prevent your making any allusions to this picture. The picture seems to have a malign influence, for my mother rarely comes here without looking at it, and still more rarely does sh- -t weeping. This disagreement

is the only one that has ever taken place between the count and countess, who are still as much united, although married more than twenty years, as on the day of their wedding."

Monte Cristo glanced rapidly at Albert as if to seek a hidden meaning in his words; but it was evident the young man uttered them in the simplicity of his heart.

"Now," said Albert, "that you have seen all my treasures, allow me to offer them to you, unworthy as they are. Consider yourself as in your own house; and to put yourself still more at your ease, pray accompany me to the apartments of M. de Morcerf, to whom I wrote from Rome an account of the services you rendered me, and to whom I announced your promised visit. And I may say that both the count and countess anxiously desire to thank you in person. You are somewhat *blasé*, I know; and family scenes have not much effect on Sinbad the Sailor, who has seen so many others. However, accept what I propose to you as an initiation into Parisian life, — a life of politeness, visiting, and introductions."

Monte Cristo bowed without making any answer; he accepted the offer without enthusiasm and without regret, as one of those conventions of society which every gentleman looks upon as a duty. Albert summoned his servant and ordered him to acquaint Monsieur and Madame de Morcerf of the arrival of the Count of Monte Cristo. Albert followed him with the count. When they arrived at the ante-chamber, above the door was visible a shield, which by its rich ornaments and its harmony with the rest of the furniture indicated the importance the owner attached to this blazon. Monte Cristo stopped and examined it attentively.

"Azure seven merlets, or, placed bender," said he. "These are doubtless your family arms? Except for the

knowledge of blazons, that enables me to decipher them, I am very ignorant of heraldry, — I, a count of a fresh creation, fabricated in Tuscany by the aid of a commandery of Saint Stephen, and who would not have taken the trouble had I not been told that when you travel much it is necessary. Besides, you must have something on the panels of your carriage to escape being searched by the custom-house officers. Excuse my putting such a question to you."

"It is not indiscreet," returned Morcerf, with the simplicity of conviction. "You have guessed rightly. These are our arms, — that is, those of my father; but they are, as you see, joined to another shield, which has gules, a silver tower, which are my mother's. By her side I am Spanish; but the family of Morcerf is French, and I have heard, one of the oldest of the south of France."

"Yes," replied Monte Cristo, "these blazons prove that; almost all the armed pilgrims that went to the Holy Land took for their arms either a cross, in honor of their mission, or birds of passage, in sign of the long voyage they were about to undertake, and which they hoped to accomplish on the wings of faith. One of your ancestors had joined the Crusades; and supposing it to be only that of Saint Louis, that makes you mount to the thirteenth century, which is tolerably ancient."

"It is possible," said Morcerf; "my father has in his study a genealogical tree which will tell you all that, and on which I made commentaries that would have greatly edified Hozier and Jaucourt. At present I no longer think of it; and yet I must tell you that we are beginning to occupy ourselves greatly with these things under our popular Government."

"Well, then, your Government would do well to choose from the past something better than the things that I have

noticed on your monuments, and which have no heraldic meaning whatever. As for you, Viscount," continued Monte Cristo to Morcerf, "you are more fortunate than the Government, for your arms are really beautiful, and speak to the imagination. Yes, you are at once from Provence and Spain; that explains, if the portrait you showed me be like, the dark hue I so much admired on the visage of the noble Catalane."

It would have required the penetration of Œdipus or the Sphinx to have divined the irony the count concealed beneath these words, apparently uttered with the greatest politeness. Morcerf thanked him with a smile, and pushed open the door above which were his arms, and which, as we have said, opened into the salon. In the most conspicuous part of the salon was another portrait. It was that of a man from thirty-five to thirty-eight years old, in the uniform of a general officer, wearing the double epaulette of gold and silver that indicates superior rank; the ribbon of the Legion of Honor round his neck, which showed he was a commander; and on the breast, on the right, the star of a grand officer of the order of the Saviour; and on the left that of the grand cross of Charles III., which proved that the person represented by the picture had served in the wars of Greece and Spain, or, what was just the same thing as regarded decorations, had fulfilled some diplomatic mission in the two countries.

Monte Cristo was engaged in examining this portrait with no less care than he had bestowed upon the other, when another door opened and he found himself in the presence of the Comte de Morcerf himself. He was a man of forty to forty-five years; but he seemed at least fifty, and his black mustache and eyebrows contrasted strangely with his almost white hair, which was cut short in the military fashion. He was dressed in plain clothes

and wore at his button-hole the ribbons of the different orders to which he belonged. This man entered with a tolerably dignified step and with a species of haste. Monte Cristo saw him advance towards him without making a single step. It seemed as if his feet were fixed to the ground as his gaze was fixed on the Comte de Morcerf.

"Father," said the young man, "I have the honor of presenting to you M. le Comte de Monte Cristo, the generous friend whom I had the good fortune to meet in the critical juncture of which I have told you."

"You are most welcome, Monsieur," said the Comte de Morcerf, saluting Monte Cristo with a smile; "and Monsieur has rendered our house, in preserving its only heir, a service which insures him our eternal gratitude."

As he said these words, the Comte de Morcerf pointed to a chair, while he seated himself in another opposite the window. Monte Cristo, while he took the seat Morcerf offered him, placed himself in such a manner as to remain concealed in the shadow of the large velvet curtains, and there he read on the careworn and livid features of the count a whole history of secret griefs written in each wrinkle planted by time.

"Madame the Countess," said Morcerf, "was at her toilet when she was informed of the visit she was about to receive. She will however be in the salon in ten minutes."

"It is a great honor for me," returned Monte Cristo, "to be thus, on the first day of my arrival in Paris, brought in contact with a man whose merit equals his reputation, and to whom fortune has for once been equitable; but has she not still on the plains of Mitidja, or in the mountains of Atlas, a marshal's staff to offer you?"

ied Morcerf, reddening slightly, "I have left

the service, Monsieur. Made a peer at the Restoration, I served through the first campaign under the orders of Maréchal Bourmont. I could therefore expect a higher rank; and who knows what might have happened had the elder branch remained on the throne? But the Revolution of July was, it seems, sufficiently glorious to allow itself to be ungrateful; and it was so for all services that did not date from the imperial period. I tendered my resignation; for when you have gained your epaulettes on the battle-field, you do not know how to manœuvre on the slippery ground of the salons. I have hung up my sword and cast myself into politics. I have devoted myself to industry; I study the useful arts. During the twenty years I served, I often wished to do so, but I had not the time."

"These are the ideas that render your nation superior to any other," returned Monte Cristo. "A gentleman of high birth, possessor of an ample fortune, you have consented to gain your promotion as an obscure soldier, step by step, — this is uncommon; then become general, peer of France, commander of the Legion of Honor, you consent to begin a second apprenticeship, without any other hope or any other desire than that of one day becoming useful to your fellow-creatures, — this indeed is praiseworthy, nay, more, it is sublime."

Albert looked on and listened with astonishment; he was not used to see Monte Cristo give vent to such bursts of enthusiasm.

"Alas!" continued the stranger, doubtless to dispel the slight cloud that covered Morcerf's brow, "we do not act thus in Italy; we grow according to our race and our species, and we pursue the same lines, and often the same uselessness all our lives."

"But, Monsieur," said the Comte de Morcerf, "for a

man of your merit, Italy is not a country, and France opens her arms to receive you; respond to her call. France will not perhaps be ungrateful to all the world; she treats her children ill, but she always welcomes strangers."

"Ah, Father!" said Albert, with a smile, "it is evident you do not know M. le Comte de Monte Cristo; he despises all honors, and contents himself with those that are written on his passport."

"That is the most just remark," replied the stranger, "I ever heard made concerning myself!"

"You have been free to choose your career," observed the Comte de Morcerf, with a sigh; "and you have chosen the path strewed with flowers."

"Precisely, Monsieur," replied Monte Cristo, with one of those smiles that a painter could never represent nor a physiologist analyze.

"If I did not fear to fatigue you," said the general, evidently charmed with the count's manners, "I would have taken you to the Chamber; there is to-day a debate which would be very interesting to those who are strangers to our modern senators."

"I shall be most grateful, Monsieur, if you will at some future time renew your offer; but I have been flattered with the hope of being presented to the countess, and I will therefore wait."

"Ah! here is my mother," cried the viscount.

Monte Cristo turned round hastily and saw Madame de rcerf at the entrance of the salon, at the door opposite hat by which her husband had entered, pale and mo-

vhen Monte Cristo turned round, she let fall her for some unknown reason had been resting on or-post. She had been there some moments he last words of the visitor. The lat-

ter rose and bowed to the countess, who inclined herself without speaking.

"Ah! good heavens, Madame!" said the count, "are you unwell, or is it the heat of the room that affects you?"

"Are you ill, Mother?" cried the viscount, springing towards Mercédès.

She thanked them both with a smile. "No," returned she; "but I feel some emotion on seeing for the first time the man without whose intervention we should have been in tears and desolation. Monsieur," continued the countess, advancing with the majesty of a queen, "I owe to you the life of my son, and for this I bless you. Now I thank you for the pleasure you give me in thus affording me the opportunity of thanking you as I have blessed you, from the bottom of my heart."

The count bowed again, but lower than before; he was even paler than Mercédès. "Madame," said he, "Monsieur the Count and yourself recompense too generously a simple action. To save a man, to spare a father's feelings or a mother's sensibility, is not to do a good action, but a simple deed of humanity."

At these words, uttered with the most exquisite sweetness and politeness, Madame de Morcerf replied, "It is very fortunate for my son, Monsieur, that he found such a friend, and I thank God who has brought these things to pass." And Mercédès raised her fine eyes to heaven with so fervent an expression of gratitude that the count fancied he saw tears in them. M. de Morcerf approached her.

"Madame," said he, "I have already made my excuses to Monsieur the Count for quitting him, and I pray you renew them. The sitting commences at two; it is now three, and I am to speak."

"Go, then, and I will endeavor to make our guest forget your absence!" replied the countess, with the same tone of deep feeling. "Monsieur the Count," continued she, turning to Monte Cristo, "will you do us the honor of passing the rest of the day with us?"

"Believe me, Madame, I feel most grateful for your kindness, but I came to your door this morning in my travelling-carriage. How I am established in Paris I do not yet know, and hardly know where,—a trivial matter, I admit, but causing me some inquietude."

"At least, we shall have this pleasure another time," said the countess; "you promise that?"

Monte Cristo inclined himself without answering; but the gesture might pass for assent.

"I will not detain you, Monsieur," continued the countess; "I would not have our gratitude become indiscreet or importunate."

"My dear count," said Albert, "I will endeavor to return your politeness at Rome, and place my coupé at your disposal until you have had time to provide yourself with carriages."

"A thousand thanks for your kindness, Viscount," returned the Count of Monte Cristo; "but I suppose that M. Bertuccio has suitably employed the four hours and a half I have given him, and that I shall find a carriage of some sort ready at the door."

Albert was used to the count's manner of proceeding; he knew that like Nero he was in search of the impossible. Nothing, now, that the count might do could surprise him; but wishing to judge with his own eyes how far the count's orders had been executed, he accompanied him to the door of the hotel. Monte Cristo was not deceived. As soon as he appeared in the Comte de Morcerf's ante-chamber, a footman, the same who at Rome had

brought the count's card to the two young men and announced his visit, sprang into the vestibule, and when he arrived at the door the illustrious traveller found his carriage awaiting him. It was a coupé of Koller's building, and with horses and harness for which Drake had, to the knowledge of all the lions of Paris, refused on the previous day eighteen thousand livres.

"Monsieur," said the count to Albert, "I do not ask you to accompany me to my house, as I can only show you a habitation fitted up in a hurry, and I have, as you know, a reputation to keep up for impromptu achievements. Give me, therefore, one more day before I invite you; I shall then be certain not to fail in my hospitality."

"If you ask me for a day, Count, I know what to anticipate; it will not be a house I shall see, but a palace. You have decidedly some *génie* at your control."

"Good! spread that idea," replied Monte Cristo, putting his foot on the velvet-lined steps of his splendid carriage, "and that will be worth something to me among the ladies."

As he spoke he sprang into the vehicle, the door was closed, and he started off at a gallop, but not so rapidly but that he could notice the almost imperceptible movement which stirred the curtains of the apartment in which he had left Madame de Morcerf.

When Albert returned to his mother, he found her in the boudoir, reclining in a large velvet armchair, — the whole room so obscure that only the shining spangle, fastened here and there to the drapery, and the angles of the gilded frames of the pictures, gave a kind of light to the room. Albert could not see the countenance of the countess, which was lost in a thin veil she had put on her head, and which descended around her features like a cloud of vapor; but it seemed to him as though her voice

had altered. He could distinguish amid the perfumes of the roses and heliotropes in the flower-stands the sharp and fragrant odor of volatile salts, and he remarked in one of the chased cups on the mantel-piece the countess's smelling-bottle, taken from its shagreen case; and he exclaimed in a tone of uneasiness as he entered, "My dear mother, have you been unwell during my absence?"

"No, no, Albert! but you know these roses, tuberoses, and orange-flowers throw out at first, before one is used to them, such violent perfumes."

"Then, my dear mother," said Albert, putting his hand to the bell, "they must be taken into the ante-chamber. You are really unwell; just now, when you came into the room, you were very pale."

"Was I pale, Albert?"

"Yes; a paleness that suits you admirably, Mother, but which did not the less alarm my father and myself!"

"Did your father speak of it?" inquired Mercédès, eagerly.

"No, Madame; but do you not remember that he remarked the fact to you?"

"Yes, I do remember," replied the countess.

A servant entered, summoned by Albert's ring of the bell.

"Take these flowers into the ante-room or dressing-room," said the viscount. "They make the countess unwell."

The footman obeyed his orders. A long pause ensued, which lasted until all the flowers were removed. "What is this name of Monte Cristo?" inquired the countess, when the servant had taken away the last vase of flowers "Is it a family name, or the name of the estate, or a simple title?"

"I believe, Mother, it is merely a title. The coun

purchased an island in the Tuscan Archipelago, and, as he told you to-day, has founded a commandery. You know the same thing was done for Saint Stephen of Florence, Saint George Constantinian of Parma, and even for the order of Malta. Except this, he has no pretension to nobility, and calls himself a chance count, although the general opinion at Rome is that the count is a man of very high distinction."

"His manners are admirable," said the countess; "at least, as far as I could judge in the few moments he remained here."

"They are perfect, Mother; so perfect that they surpass by far all I have known in the leading aristocracy of the three proudest nobilities of Europe, — the English, Spanish, and German."

The countess reflected a moment; then, after a slight hesitation, she said, "You have seen, my dear Albert, — I ask the question as a mother, — you have seen M. de Monte Cristo in his house; you are quick-sighted, have much knowledge of the world, more tact than is usual at your age, — do you think the count is really what he appears to be?"

"What does he appear to be?"

"Why, you have just said, — a man of high distinction."

"I told you, my dear mother, he was esteemed such."

"But what is your own opinion, Albert?"

"I must tell you that I have not come to any decided opinion respecting him, but I think him a Maltese."

"I do not ask you of his origin, but what he is."

"Ah! what he is; that is quite another thing. I have seen so many remarkable things in connection with him that if you would have me really say what I think, I shall reply that I really do look upon him as one of Byron's heroes, whom misery has marked with a fatal brand, —

some Manfred, some Lara, some Werner, one of those relics, in short, of some ancient family, who, disinherited of their patrimony, have achieved fortune by the force of their adventurous genius, which has placed them above the laws of society."

"You say — "

"I say that Monte Cristo is an island in the midst of the Mediterranean, without inhabitants or garrison, — the resort of smugglers of all nations, and pirates of every flag. Who knows whether or not these industrious worthies do not pay to their feudal lord some dues for his protection?"

"That is possible," said the countess, reflecting.

"Never mind," continued the young man; "smuggler or not, you must agree, Mother dear, as you have seen him, that the Count of Monte Cristo is a remarkable man, who will have the greatest success in the salons of Paris. Why, this very morning, at my abode, he began his entrance into society by striking every man of us with amazement, not even excepting Château-Renaud!"

"And what do you suppose is the count's age?" inquired Mercédès, evidently attaching great importance to this question.

"Thirty-five or thirty-six, Mother."

"So young! it is impossible," said Mercédès, replying at the same time to what Albert said as well as to her own private reflection.

"It is the truth, however. Three or four times he has said to me, and certainly without the slightest premeditation: At such a period I was five years old, at another ten years old, at another twelve; and I, induced by curiosity which kept me alive at these details, have compared the dates, and never found him inaccurate. The age of this singular man, who is of no age, is then, I am certain, thirty-five. Besides, Mother, remark how vivid his eye,

how raven-black his hair; and his brow, though so pale, is free from wrinkles, — he is not only vigorous, but also young."

The countess bent her head as if beneath a heavy wave of bitter thoughts. "And has this man displayed a friendship for you, Albert?" she asked with a nervous shudder.

"I am inclined to think so."

"And — do — you — like — him?"

"Why, he pleases me in spite of Franz d'Épinay, who tries to convince me that he is a being returned from the other world."

The countess shuddered. "Albert," she said in a voice which was altered by emotion, "I have always put you on your guard against new acquaintances. Now you are a man, and are able to give me advice; yet I repeat to you, Albert, be prudent."

"Why, my dear mother, it is necessary in order to make your advice practicable that I should know beforehand what I have to distrust. The count never plays; he only drinks pure water tinged with a little sherry, and is so rich that he cannot, without intending to laugh at me, try to borrow money. What, then, have I to fear from him?"

"You are right," said the countess; "and my fears are weakness, especially when directed against a man who has saved your life. How did your father receive him, Albert? It is necessary that we should be more than complaisant to the count. M. de Morcerf is sometimes preoccupied, — his affairs make him anxious; and he might, without intending it — "

"Nothing could be in better taste than my father's demeanor, Madame," said Albert; "nay, more, he seemed greatly flattered at two or three compliments which the

count very skilfully and agreeably paid him with as much ease as if he had known him these thirty years. Each of these little tickling arrows must have pleased my father," added Albert, with a laugh. "And thus they parted the best possible friends; and M. de Morcerf even wished to take him to the Chamber to hear the speakers."

The countess made no reply. She fell into so deep a revery that her eyes gradually closed. The young man, standing up before her, gazed upon her with that filial affection which is more tender and endearing with children whose mothers are still young and handsome. Then, after seeing her eyes closed, and hearing her breathe gently, he believed she had dropped asleep, and left the apartment on tiptoe, closing the door after him with the utmost precaution. "This devil of a fellow!" he muttered, shaking his head; "I said at the time he would create a sensation here, and I measure his effect by an infallible thermometer. My mother has noticed him, and he must therefore perforce be remarkable." He went down to the stables, not without some slight annoyance when he remembered that the Count of Monte Cristo had laid his hands on a "turnout" which sent his bays down to number two in the opinion of connoisseurs. "Most decidedly," said he, "men are not equal; I must beg my father to develop this subject in the Chamber of Peers."

CHAPTER V.

MONSIEUR BERTUCCIO.

During this time the count had arrived at his house. It had taken him six minutes to perform the distance; but these six minutes were sufficient to induce twenty young men who knew the price of the equipage they had been unable to purchase themselves, to put their horses to a gallop in order to see the rich foreigner who could afford to give ten thousand livres apiece for his horses. The house Ali had chosen, and which was to serve as a town residence to Monte Cristo, was situated on the right hand as you ascend the Champs Élysées. A thick clump of trees and shrubs rose in the centre, and masked a portion of the front; around this shrubbery two alleys, like two arms, extended right and left, and formed a carriage-drive from the iron gates to a double portico, on every step of which stood a porcelain vase filled with flowers. This house, isolated from the rest, had besides the main entrance another in the Rue Ponthieu. Even before the coachman had hailed the *concierge*, the massy gates rolled on their hinges; they had seen the count coming, and at Paris, as everywhere else, he was served with the rapidity of lightning. The coachman entered and descended the half-circle without slackening his speed, and the gates were closed ere the wheels had ceased to sound on the gravel. The carriage stopped at the left side of the portico; two men presented themselves at the carriage-window. The one was Ali, who, smiling with an expression of the

most sincere joy, seemed amply repaid by a mere look from Monte Cristo; the other bowed respectfully, and offered his arm to assist the count in descending.

"Thanks, M. Bertuccio," said the count, lightly springing up the three steps of the portico; "and the notary?"

"He is in the small salon, Excellency," returned Bertuccio.

"And the cards I ordered to be engraved as soon as you knew the number of the house?"

"Monsieur the Count, it is done already. I have been myself to the best engraver of the Palais-Royal, who did the plate in my presence. The first card struck off was taken, according to your orders, to M. le Baron Danglars, Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, No. 7; the others are on the mantel-piece of your Excellency's bedroom."

"Good; what o'clock is it?"

"Four o'clock."

Monte Cristo gave his hat, cane, and gloves to the same French footman who had called his carriage at the Comte de Morcerf's, and then he passed into the small salon, preceded by Bertuccio, who showed him the way.

"These are but indifferent marbles in this ante-chamber," said Monte Cristo. "I trust they all will soon be taken away."

Bertuccio bowed. As the steward had said, the notary awaited the count in the small salon. He was a simple-looking lawyer's clerk, elevated to the extraordinary dignity of a provincial scrivener.

"You are the notary empowered to sell the country-house that I wish to purchase, Monsieur?" asked Monte Cristo.

"Yes, Monsieur the Count," returned the notary.

"Is the deed of sale ready?"

"Yes, Monsieur the Count."

"Have you brought it?"

"Here it is."

"Very well; and where is this house that I purchase?" asked the count, carelessly, addressing himself half to Bertuccio, half to the notary. The steward made a gesture that signified, "I do not know." The notary looked at the count with astonishment. "What!" said he, "does not Monsieur the Count know where the house he purchases is situated?"

"No," returned the count.

"Monsieur the Count does not know it?"

"How should I know it? I have arrived from Cadiz this morning. I have never before been at Paris; and it is the first time I have ever even set my foot in France!"

"Ah! that is different; the house you purchase is situated at Auteuil." At these words Bertuccio turned pale.

"And where is Auteuil?" asked the count.

"Two steps from here, Monsieur," replied the notary; "a little beyond Passy, — a charming situation, in the heart of the Bois de Boulogne."

"So near as that?" said the count; "but that is not in the country. What made you choose a house at the gates of Paris, M. Bertuccio?"

"I!" cried the steward, with a strange expression. "Monsieur the Count did not charge me to purchase this house. If Monsieur the Count will recollect — if he will think — "

"Ah, true," observed Monte Cristo; "I recollect now. I read the advertisement in one of the papers, and was tempted by the false title, 'a country-house.'"

"It is not yet too late," cried Bertuccio, eagerly; "and if your Excellency will intrust me with the commission, I will find you a better at Enghien, at Fontenay aux Roses, or at Bellevue."

"Oh, no," returned Monte Cristo, negligently; "since I have this, I will keep it."

"And you are quite right," said the notary, who feared to lose his fee. "It is a charming place, — running water, fine trees, a comfortable habitation, although abandoned for a long time, without reckoning the furniture, which, although old, is yet valuable now that old things are so much sought after. I suppose Monsieur the Count has the tastes of the day?"

"To be sure," returned Monte Cristo; "it is very convenient, then?"

"It is more, — it is magnificent."

"*Peste!* let us not lose such an opportunity," returned Monte Cristo. "The deed, if you please, Monsieur the Notary." And he signed it rapidly, after having first run his eye over that part of the deed in which were specified the situation of the house and the names of the proprietors. "Bertuccio," said he, "give fifty-five thousand livres to Monsieur." The steward left the room with a faltering step, and returned with a bundle of bank-notes, which the notary counted like a man who never gives a receipt for money until after legal examination.

"And now," demanded the count, "are all the forms complied with?"

"All, Monsieur the Count."

"Have you the keys?"

"They are in the hands of the *concierge*, who takes care of the house; but here is the order which I have written him to install Monsieur the Count in his new possession."

"Very well;" and Monte Cristo made a sign with his hand to the notary, which said, "I have no further need of you; you may go."

"R[illegible] [illegible]otary, "you are mistaken,

I think, Monsieur the Count; it is only fifty thousand livres, everything included."

"And your fee?"

"Is included in this sum."

"But have you not come from Auteuil here?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Well, then, it is but fair that you should be paid for your loss of time and trouble," said the count; and he made a gesture of polite dismissal. The notary left the room backwards, and bowing down to the ground; it was the first time he had ever met such a client.

"See this gentleman out," said the count to Bertuccio. And the steward followed the notary out of the room.

Scarcely was the count alone, when he drew from his pocket a book closed with a lock, and opened it with a key which he wore round his neck, and which never left him. After having sought for a few minutes, he stopped at a leaf which contained a few notes and compared them with the deed of sale which lay on the table, and reviving his recollections, "'Auteuil, Rue de la Fontaine, No. 28.' It is indeed the same," said he; "and now, am I to rely upon an avowal extorted by religious or by physical terror? However, in an hour I shall know all. Bertuccio!" cried he, striking a light hammer with a pliant handle on a small gong. "Bertuccio!" The steward appeared at the door. "M. Bertuccio," said the count, "did you not once tell me that you had travelled in France?"

"In some parts of France,— yes, Excellency."

"You know the environs of Paris, then?"

"No, Excellency, no," returned the steward, with a sort of nervous trembling which Monte Cristo, a connoisseur in all emotions, rightly attributed to great disquietude.

"It is unfortunate," returned he, "that you have never

visited the environs, for I wish to see my new property this evening; and in going with me you might have given me some useful information."

"To Auteuil!" cried Bertuccio, whose copper complexion became livid, — "I go to Auteuil?"

"Well, what is there surprising in that? When I live at Auteuil you must come there, as you belong to my service."

Bertuccio hung down his head before the imperious look of his master and remained motionless, without making any answer.

"Why, what has happened to you? Are you going to make me ring a second time for the carriage?" asked Monte Cristo, in the same tone that Louis XIV. pronounced the famous. "I have been almost obliged to wait."

Bertuccio made but one bound to the ante-chamber and cried in a hoarse voice, "His Excellency's horses!"

Monte Cristo wrote two or three notes; and as he sealed the last the steward appeared. "Your Excellency's carriage is at the door," said he.

"Well, take your hat and gloves," returned Monte Cristo.

"Am I to accompany you, Monsieur the Count?" cried Bertuccio.

"Certainly, you must give your orders, for I intend residing at the house."

It was unexampled for a servant of the count's to dare to dispute an order of his; so the steward, without saying a word, followed his master, who got into the carriage and signed him to follow, which he did, seating himself respectfully on the front seat.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HOUSE AT AUTEUIL.

MONTE CRISTO had remarked that as they descended the staircase Bertuccio signed himself in the Corsican manner, —that is, had formed the sign of the cross in the air with his thumb, — and as he seated himself in the carriage, muttered a short prayer. Any one but a curious man would have had pity on seeing the steward's extraordinary repugnance for the count's projected drive beyond the walls; but it seemed the count was too curious to excuse Bertuccio this little journey. In twenty minutes they were at Auteuil; the steward's emotion had continued to increase as they entered the village. Bertuccio, crouched in a corner of the carriage, began to examine with a feverish anxiety every house they passed.

"Tell them to stop at Rue de la Fontaine, No. 28," said the count, fixing his eyes on the steward, to whom he gave this order.

Bertuccio's forehead was covered with perspiration; but he obeyed, and leaning out of the window he cried to the coachman, "Rue de la Fontaine, No. 28."

No. 28 was situated at the extremity of the village; during the drive night had set in, or rather a black cloud charged with electricity gave to that early darkness the appearance and solemnity of a dramatic episode. The carriage stopped; the footman sprang off the box, and opened the door.

"Well," said the count, "you do not get out, M. Ber-

tuccio, — you are going to stay in the carriage, then? What are you thinking of this evening?"

Bertuccio sprang out and offered his shoulder to the count, who this time leaned upon it as he descended the three steps of the carriage.

"Knock," said the count, "and announce me."

Bertuccio knocked; the door opened, and the *concierge* appeared. "What is it?" asked he.

"It is your new master, my good fellow," said the footman; and he held out to the *concierge* the notary's order.

"The house is sold, then?" demanded the *concierge*; "and this gentleman is coming to live here?"

"Yes, my friend," returned the count; "and I will endeavor to give you no cause to regret your old master."

"Oh, Monsieur," said the *concierge*, "I shall not have much cause to regret him, for he came here but seldom. It is five years since he was here last; and he did well to sell the house, for it did not bring him in anything at all."

"What was the name of your old master?" said Monte Cristo.

"M. le Marquis de Saint-Méran. Ah, I am sure he has not sold the house for what he gave for it."

"The Marquis de Saint-Méran!" returned the count. "The name is not unknown to me; the Marquis de Saint-Méran!" and he appeared to meditate.

"An old gentleman," continued the *concierge*, "a stanch follower of the Bourbons; he had an only daughter, who married M. de Villefort, who had been the *procureur du roi* at Nîmes, and afterwards at Versailles."

Monte Cristo glanced at Bertuccio, who became whiter than the wall against which he leaned to prevent himself from falling. "... this daughter dead?" demanded ... "... have heard so."

"Yes, Monsieur, twenty-one years ago; and since then we have not seen the poor marquis three times."

"Thanks, thanks," said Monte Cristo, judging from the steward's utter prostration that he could not stretch the cord farther without danger of breaking it. "Give me a light."

"Shall I accompany you, Monsieur?"

"No, it is unnecessary; Bertuccio will light me." And Monte Cristo accompanied these words by the gift of two pieces of gold, which produced a torrent of thanks and blessings from the *concierge*.

"Ah, Monsieur," said he, after having vainly searched on the mantel-piece and the shelves, "I have no candles."

"Take one of the carriage-lamps, Bertuccio," said the count, "and show me the apartments."

The steward obeyed in silence; but it was easy to see from the manner in which the hand that held the light trembled, how much it cost him to obey. They went over a tolerably large ground-floor, a first floor consisting of a salon, a bathroom, and two bedrooms; by one of these bedrooms they arrived at a winding staircase that opened on to the garden.

"Ah! here is a private staircase," said the count; "that is convenient. Light me, M. Bertuccio, and go first; we will see where it leads to."

"Monsieur," replied Bertuccio, "it leads to the garden."

"And, pray, how do you know that?"

"It ought to do so, at least."

"Well, let us be sure of that."

Bertuccio sighed, and went on first; the stairs led, in fact, to the garden. At the outer door the steward paused. "Go on, M. Bertuccio," said the count. But he to whom he spoke was stupefied, bewildered, stunned; his haggard eyes glanced round, as if in search of the traces

of some terrible event, and with his clinched hands he seemed striving to shut out some horrible recollections.

"Well!" insisted the count.

"No, no," cried Bertuccio, setting down the lantern at the angle of the interior wall. "No, Monsieur, it is impossible; I can go no farther."

"What does this mean?" demanded the irresistible voice of Monte Cristo.

"Why, you must see, Monsieur the Count," cried the steward, "that this is not natural, — that having a house to purchase, you purchase it exactly at Auteuil; and that, purchasing it at Auteuil, this house should be No. 28, Rue de la Fontaine. Oh! why did I not tell you all? I am sure you would not have forced me to come. I hoped your house would have been some other one than this; as if there was not another house at Auteuil than that of the assassination!"

"Ah, ah!" cried Monte Cristo, stopping suddenly, "what words did you utter? Devil of a man, Corsican that you are, — always mysteries or superstitions. Come, take the lantern, and let us visit the garden; you are not afraid with me, I hope?"

Bertuccio raised the lantern and obeyed. The door, as it opened, disclosed a gloomy sky, in which the moon strove vainly to struggle through a sea of clouds that covered her with their sombre wave, that she illumined for an instant, and was then lost in the darkness. The steward wished to turn to the left.

"No, no, Monsieur," said Monte Cristo; "what is the use of following the alleys? Here is a beautiful lawn; let us go on straight forwards."

Bertuccio wiped the perspiration from his brow, but obeyed; however, he continued to take the left hand. Monte Cristo, on the contrary, took the right hand:

arrived near a clump of trees, he stopped. The steward could not restrain himself. "Move, Monsieur, — move away, I entreat you; you are exactly in the spot!"

"What spot?"

"Where he fell."

"My dear M. Bertuccio," said Monte Cristo, laughing, "recover yourself; we are no longer at Sartène or at Corté. This is not a *maquis* but an English garden, — badly kept, I own, but you must not calumniate it for that."

"Monsieur, I implore you, do not stay there!"

"I think you are going mad, Bertuccio," said the count, coldly. "If that is the case, I warn you I shall have you put in a lunatic asylum."

"Alas, Excellency," returned Bertuccio, joining his hands, and shaking his head in a manner that would have excited the count's laughter, had not thoughts of a superior interest occupied him and rendered him attentive to the least revelation of this timorous conscience, — "alas, Excellency, the evil has arrived!"

"M. Bertuccio," said the count, "I am very glad to tell you that while you gesticulate you wring your hands and roll your eyes like a man possessed by a devil that will not leave him; and I have always remarked that the devil most obstinate to be expelled is a secret. I knew you were a Corsican; I knew you were gloomy, and always brooding over some old history of the vendetta; and I overlooked that in Italy, because in Italy those things are thought nothing of. But in France assassination is generally held to be in very bad taste; there are gendarmes who occupy themselves with such affairs, judges who condemn, and scaffolds which avenge."

Bertuccio clasped his hands, and as in all these evolutions he did not let fall the lantern, the light showed his

pale and altered countenance. Monte Cristo examined him with the same expression with which at Rome he had viewed the execution of Andrea, and then, in a tone that made a shudder pass through the veins of the poor steward, "The Abbé Busoni, then, told me an untruth," said he, "when after his journey in France, in 1829, he sent you to me with a letter of recommendation, in which he enumerated all your valuable qualities. Well, I shall write to the abbé; I shall render him responsible for his *protégé's* misconduct, and I shall soon know all about this assassination. Only I warn you that when I reside in a country, I conform to all its code, and I have no wish to embroil myself with French justice for your sake."

"Oh, do not do that, Excellency; I have always served you faithfully," cried Bertuccio, in despair. "I have always been an honest man, and as far as lay in my power I have done good."

"I do not deny it," returned the count; "but why are you thus agitated? It is a bad sign; a quiet conscience does not occasion such paleness in the cheeks and such fever in the hands — "

"But, Monsieur the Count," replied Bertuccio, hesitatingly, "did not M. l'Abbé Busoni, who heard my confession in the prison at Nîmes, tell you I had a heavy reproach to make against myself."

"Yes; but as he said you would make an excellent steward, I concluded you had stolen, — that was all."

"Oh, Monsieur the Count!" returned Bertuccio, contemptuously.

"Or, as you are a Corsican, that you had been unable to resist the desire of making a *peau*, as you call it."

"Y[illegible]" cried Bertuccio, casting him[illegible]

[illegible] simply a vengeance,

"I understand that; but I do not understand what it is that galvanizes you in this manner."

"But, Monsieur, it is very natural," returned Bertuccio; "since it was in this house that my vengeance was accomplished."

"What! my house?"

"Oh, Monsieur the Count, it was not yours then."

"Whose, then? M. le Marquis de Saint-Méran, I think the *concierge* said. What had you to revenge on the Marquis de Saint-Méran?"

"Oh, it was not on him, Monsieur; it was on another."

"This is strange," returned Monte Cristo, seeming to yield to his reflections, — "that you should find yourself without any preparation in a house where the event happened that causes you so much remorse."

"Monsieur," said the steward, "it is fatality, I am sure. First, you purchase a house at Auteuil; that house is the one where I have committed an assassination; you descend to the garden by the same staircase by which he descended; you stop at the spot where he received the blow; and two paces farther is the grave in which he had just buried his child. This is not chance, — for chance in this case resembles Providence too much."

"Well, Monsieur the Corsican, let us suppose it is Providence. I always suppose anything people please; and besides, you must concede something to diseased minds. Come, collect yourself, and tell me all."

"I have never related it but once, and that was to the Abbé Busoni. Such things," continued Bertuccio, shaking his head, "are only related under the seal of confession."

"Then," said the count, "I refer you to your confessor. Turn Chartreux or Trappist, and relate your secrets; but me, I do not like any one who is alarmed by such

phantasms, and I do not choose that my servants should be afraid to walk in the garden of an evening. I confess I am not very desirous of a visit from the commissary of police; for in Italy justice is only paid when silent, in France she is paid only when she speaks. *Peste!* I thought you somewhat Corsican, a great deal smuggler, and an excellent steward; but I see you have other strings to your bow. You are no longer in my service, M. Bertuccio."

"Oh, Monsieur the Count, Monsieur the Count!" cried the steward, struck with terror at this threat, "if that is the only reason I cannot remain in your service, I will tell all, — for if I quit you it will only be to go to the scaffold."

"That is different," replied Monte Cristo; "but if you intend to tell an untruth, reflect. It were better not to speak at all."

"No, Monsieur, I swear to you by my hopes of salvation I will tell you all, for the Abbé Busoni himself only knew a part of my secret; but I pray you go away from that plane-tree. The moon is just bursting through the clouds, and there, standing where you do, and wrapped in that cloak that conceals your figure, you remind me of M. de Villefort."

"What!" cried Monte Cristo, "it was, then, M. de Villefort?"

"Your Excellency knows him?"

"The former *procureur du roi* at Nîmes?"

"Yes."

"Who married the Marquis de Saint-Méran's daughter?"

"Yes."

"Who enjoyed the reputation of being the most severe, the most upright, the most rigid magistrate on the bench?"

"Well, Monsieur," said Bertuccio, "this man with this spotless reputation — "

"Well?"

"Was a villain."

"Bah!" replied Monte Cristo, "impossible!"

"It is as I tell you."

"Ah, really!" said Monte Cristo. "Have you proof of this?"

"I had it."

"And you have lost it; how stupid!"

"Yes; but by careful search it might be recovered."

"Really?" returned the count; "relate it to me, for it begins to interest me." And the count, humming an air from "Lucia di Lammermoor," went to sit down on a bench, while Bertuccio followed him, collecting his thoughts. Bertuccio remained standing before him.

CHAPTER VII.

THE VENDETTA.

"At what point shall I begin my story, Monsieur the Count?" asked Bertuccio.

"Where you please," returned Monte Cristo, "since I know nothing at all of it."

"I thought M. l'Abbé Busoni had told your Excellency."

"Some particulars, doubtless; but that is seven or eight years ago, and I have forgotten them."

"Then I can speak without fear of tiring your Excellency?"

"Go on, M. Bertuccio; you will supply the want of the evening papers."

"The story begins in 1815."

"Ah," said Monte Cristo, "1815 is not yesterday."

"No, Monsieur; and yet I recollect all things as clearly as if they had happened but yesterday. I had a brother, an elder brother, who was in the service of the emperor; he had become lieutenant in a regiment composed entirely of Corsicans. This brother was my only friend; we became orphans, — I at five, he at eighteen. He brought me up as if I had been his son, and in 1814 he married. When the emperor returned from the island of Elba, my brother instantly joined the army, was slightly wounded at Waterloo, and retired with the army behind the Loire."

"But that is the history of the Hundred Days, M.

Bertuccio," said the count; "unless I am mistaken, it has been already written."

"Excuse me, Excellency, but these details are necessary, and you promised to be patient."

"Go on; I will keep my word."

"One day we received a letter. I should tell you that we lived in the little village of Rogliano, at the extremity of Cape Corse. This letter was from my brother. He told us that the army was disbanded, and that he should return by Châteauroux, Clermont-Ferrand, Le Puy, and Nîmes; and if I had any money, he prayed me to leave it for him at Nîmes, with an innkeeper with whom I had dealings."

"In the smuggling line?" said Monte Cristo.

"Eh, Monsieur the Count? Every one must live."

"Certainly; continue."

"I loved my brother tenderly, as I told your Excellency, and I resolved not to send the money, but to take it to him myself. I possessed a thousand livres. I left five hundred with Assunta, my sister-in-law, and with the other five hundred I set off for Nîmes. It was easy to do so; and as I had my boat and a lading to take in at sea, everything favored my project. But after we had taken in our cargo, the wind became contrary, so that we were four or five days without being able to enter the Rhone. At last, however, we succeeded, and worked up to Arles; I left the boat between Bellegarde and Beaucaire, and took the road to Nîmes."

"We are getting to the story now?"

"Yes, your Excellency; excuse me, but, as you will see, I only tell you what is absolutely necessary. Just at this time the famous massacres of the south of France took place. Two or three brigands, called Trestaillon, Truphemy, and Graffan, publicly assassinated everybody

whom they suspected of Bonapartism. You have doubtless heard of these massacres, Monsieur the Count?"

"Vaguely; I was far from France at that period. Go on."

"As I entered Nîmes, I literally waded in blood; at every step I encountered dead bodies, and bands of the murderers, who killed, plundered, and burned. At the sight of this slaughter and devastation I became terrified, — not for myself (for I, a simple Corsican fisherman, had nothing to fear; on the contrary, that time was most favorable for us smugglers); but for my brother, a soldier of the empire, returning from the army of the Loire, with his uniform and his epaulettes, there was everything to apprehend. I hastened to the innkeeper. My presages had been but too true; my brother had arrived the previous evening at Nîmes, and at the very door of the house where he was about to demand hospitality, he had been assassinated. I did all in my power to discover the murderers, but no one durst tell me their names, so much were they dreaded. I then thought of that French justice of which I had heard so much, and which feared nothing; and I went to the *procureur du roi.*"

"And this *procureur du roi* was named Villefort?" asked Monte Cristo, carelessly.

"Yes, your Excellency; he came from Marseilles, where he had been deputy *procureur.* His zeal had procured him advancement, and he was said to be one of the first who had informed the Government of the departure from the island of Elba."

"Then," said Monte Cristo, "you went to him?"

"'Monsieur,' I said, 'my brother was assassinated yesterday in the streets of Nîmes, I know not by whom, but it is your duty to find out. You are the head of justice here; and it is for justice to avenge those she has been

unable to protect.' 'Who was your brother?' asked he. 'A lieutenant in the Corsican battalion.' 'A soldier of the usurper, then?' 'A soldier of the French army.' 'Well,' replied he, 'he has smitten with the sword, and has perished by the sword.' 'You are mistaken, Monsieur,' I replied; 'he has perished by the poniard.' 'What do you want me to do?' asked the magistrate. 'I have already told you, — avenge him.' 'On whom?' 'On his murderers.' 'How should I know who they are?' 'Order them to be sought for.' 'Why? your brother has been involved in a quarrel, and killed in a duel. All these old soldiers commit excesses, which were tolerated in the time of the emperor, but which are not suffered now; for our people of the South do not like either soldiers or disorder.'

"'Monsieur,' I replied, 'it is not for myself that I entreat your interference, — I should grieve for him or avenge him; but my poor brother had a wife, and were anything to happen to me, the poor creature would perish from want, — for my brother's pay alone kept her. Pray try and obtain a small government pension for her.' 'Every revolution has its catastrophes,' returned M. de Villefort; 'your brother has been the victim of this. It is a misfortune, and Government owes nothing to his family. If we are to judge by all the acts of vengeance that the followers of the usurper exercised on the partisans of the king, when in their turn they were in power, your brother would be to-day in all probability condemned to death. What has happened is quite natural, and is only the law of reprisals.' 'What!' cried I, 'do you, a magistrate, speak thus to me?' 'All these Corsicans are mad, on my honor,' replied M. de Villefort; 'they fancy that their countryman is still emperor. You have mistaken the time; you should have told me this two months ago, — it is too late now. Depart instantly, or I will compel you to do so.' I looked at him

an instant to see if there was anything to be gained by renewed entreaties; but this man was of stone. I approached him and said in a low voice, 'Well, since you know the Corsicans so well, you know that they always keep their word. You think that it was a good deed to kill my brother, who was a Bonapartist, because you are a Royalist! Well, I, who am a Bonapartist also, declare one thing to you, which is that I will kill you! From this moment I declare the vendetta against you; so protect yourself as well as you can, for the next time we meet your last hour will have come!' And before he had recovered from his surprise, I opened the door and escaped."

"Ah, ah!" said Monte Cristo, "with your innocent appearance you do those things, M. Bertuccio, and to a *procureur du roi!* And did he know what was meant by this terrible word 'vendetta'?"

"He knew so well that from that moment he never went out unattended, but shut himself up in his house, and caused me to be searched for everywhere. Fortunately, I was so well concealed that he could not find me. Then he became alarmed, and dared not reside any longer at Nîmes; so he solicited a change of residence, and as he was in reality very influential, he was nominated to Versailles. But, as you know, a Corsican who has sworn to avenge himself cares not for distance; so his carriage, fast as it went, was never above half a day's journey before me, who followed him on foot. The most important thing was not to kill him only — for I had an opportunity of doing so a hundred times — but to kill him without being discovered; at least, without being arrested. I no longer belonged to myself, for I had my sister-in-law to protect and provide for. During three months I watched M. de Villefort; for three months he took not a step out of doors without my following him. At length I discovered that

he went mysteriously to Auteuil. I followed him thither, and I saw him enter the house where we now are; only, instead of entering by the great door that looks into the street, he came on horseback or in his carriage, left carriage or horse at the little inn, and entered by the gate you see there!"

Monte Cristo made a sign with his head that he could discern amid the darkness the door to which Bertuccio alluded.

"As I had nothing more to do at Versailles, I went to Auteuil and gained all the information I could. If I wished to surprise him, it was evident that this was the place in which to lie in wait for him. The house belonged, as the *concierge* informed your Excellency, to M. de Saint-Méran, Villefort's father-in-law. M. de Saint-Méran lived at Marseilles, so that this country-house was useless to him; and it was reported to be let to a young widow, known only by the name of 'the Baroness.'

"One evening, as I was looking over the wall, I saw a young and handsome woman who was walking alone in that garden, which was not overlooked by any windows; and I guessed that she was awaiting M. de Villefort. When she was sufficiently near to distinguish her features, I saw that she was from eighteen to nineteen years of age, tall and very fair. As she had a loose muslin dress on, and as nothing concealed her figure, I saw that she would ere long become a mother. A few moments after, the little door was opened, and a man entered; the young woman hastened to meet him. They threw themselves into each other's arms, embraced tenderly, and returned together to the house. This man was M. de Villefort; my opinion was that when he should go away, especially if he went in the night, he would have to traverse the whole of the garden alone."

"And," asked the count, "did you ever know the name of this woman?"

"No, Excellency," returned Bertuccio; "you will see that I had no time to learn it."

"Go on."

"That evening," continued Bertuccio, "I could have killed the *procureur du roi;* but I was not sufficiently master of the localities. I was afraid that I might not kill him instantly, and that should his cries give the alarm, I could not escape. I deferred the undertaking until his next visit; and in order that nothing should escape me I took a chamber looking into the street, along which ran the wall of the garden. Three days after, about seven o'clock in the evening, I saw a servant on horseback leave the house at full gallop and take the road that led to Sèvres. I conjectured he was going to Versailles, and I was not deceived. Three hours after, the man returned covered with dust; his errand was performed. Ten minutes later another man, on foot, muffled in a mantle, opened the little door of the garden, which he closed after him. I descended rapidly; although I had not seen Villefort's face, I recognized him by the beating of my heart. I crossed the street and stopped at a post placed at the angle of the wall, by the aid of which I had once before looked into the garden. This time I did not content myself with looking, but I took my knife out of my pocket, assured myself that the point was sharp, and sprang over the wall. My first care was to run to the door; he had left the key in it, taking the simple precaution of turning it twice in the lock. Nothing, then, prevented my escape by this door. I examined the localities. The garden formed a long square; a terrace of smooth turf extended in the middle, and at the corners were tufts of trees with thick and massive foliage that mingled with

the shrubs and flowers. In order to go from the door to the house, or from the house to the door, M. de Villefort was compelled to pass by one of these clumps.

"It was the end of September; the wind blew violently. The faint gleams of the pale moon, hidden at every instant by the masses of dark clouds that were sweeping across the sky, whitened the gravel walks that led to the house, but were unable to pierce the obscurity of the thick shrubberies, in which a man could conceal himself without any fear of discovery. I hid myself in the one nearest to the path Villefort must take, and scarcely was I there when amid the gusts of wind I fancied I heard groans; but you know, or rather you do not know, Monsieur the Count, that he who is about to commit an assassination fancies he hears low cries in the air. Two hours passed thus, during which I imagined I heard these moans repeated. Midnight struck. As the last stroke died away, I saw a faint light shine through the windows of the private staircase by which we have just descended. The door opened, and the man in the mantle reappeared. The terrible moment had come! but I had so long been prepared for it that my heart did not fail in the least. I drew my knife from my pocket again, opened it, and prepared myself to strike. The man in the mantle advanced towards me, but as he drew near I saw that he had a weapon in his hand. I was afraid, not of a struggle, but of a failure. When he was only a few paces from me I saw that what I had taken for a weapon was only a spade. I was still unable to divine for what reason M. de Villefort had this spade in his hands, when he stopped close to the clump, glanced round, and began to dig a hole in the earth. I then perceived that he hid something beneath his mantle, which he laid on the grass in order to dig more freely. Then, I confess, curiosity became mixed

with my hatred; I wished to see what Villefort was going to do there, and I remained motionless, holding my breath. Then an idea crossed my mind, which was confirmed when I saw the *procureur du roi* draw from under his mantle a box two feet long and six or eight inches deep. I let him place the box in the hole he had made; then, while he stamped with his feet to remove all traces of his occupation, I rushed on him and plunged my knife into his breast, exclaiming: 'I am Giovanni Bertuccio; thy death for my brother's; thy treasure for his widow! Thou seest that my vengeance is more complete than I had hoped!' I know not if he heard these words; I think he did not, for he fell without a cry. I felt his blood gush over my face; but I was intoxicated, I was delirious, and the blood refreshed instead of burning me. In a second I had disinterred the box; then, that it might not be known that I had done so, I filled up the hole, threw the spade over the wall, and rushed through the door, which I double-locked, carrying off the key."

"Ah!" said Monte Cristo, "it seems to me this was a little assassination combined with robbery."

"No, your Excellency," returned Bertuccio; "it was a vendetta followed by a restitution."

"And was the sum a large one?"

"It was not money."

"Ah! I recollect," replied the count; "did you not say something of an infant?"

"Yes, Excellency; I hastened to the river, sat down on the bank, and with my knife forced open the lock of the box. In a fine linen cloth was wrapped a new-born child. Its purple visage and its violet-colored hands showed that it had perished from suffocation; but as it was not yet cold I hesitated to throw it into the water that ran at my feet. In fact, after a moment I fancied I felt a slight pul-

sation of its heart; and as I had been assistant at the hospital at Bastia, I did what a doctor would have done, — I inflated its lungs by blowing air into them. And at the expiration of a quarter of an hour I saw it breathe, and heard a feeble cry; in my turn, I uttered a cry, but a cry of joy. 'God has not cursed me, then,' I cried, 'since he permits me to save the life of a human creature in exchange for the life I have taken away.'"

"And what did you do with the child?" asked Monte Cristo. "It was an embarrassing load for a man seeking to escape."

"I had not for a moment the idea of keeping it; but I knew that at Paris there was a hospital where they receive these poor creatures. As I passed the barrier I declared I had found this child on the road, and I inquired where the hospital was. The box confirmed my statement; the linen proved it belonged to wealthy parents; the blood with which I was covered might have proceeded from the child as well as from any one else. No objection was raised, but they pointed out to me the hospital, which was situated at the upper end of the Rue d'Enfer; and after having taken the precaution of cutting the linen in two pieces, so that one of the two letters which marked it was wrapped round the child, while the other remained in my possession, I rang the bell and fled with all speed. A fortnight after I was at Rogliano, and I said to Assunta, 'Console thyself, Sister; Israel is dead, but he is avenged.' She asked what I meant, and when I had recounted all to her, 'Giovanni,' said she, 'you should have brought this child with you. We would have replaced the parents it has lost, have called it Benedetto; and then in consequence of this good action, God would have blessed us.' In reply I gave her the half of the linen I had kept, in order to reclaim him if we should become more prosperous."

"What letters were marked on the linen?" said Monte Cristo.

"An H and an N, surmounted by a baron's torse."

"By Heaven, M. Bertuccio, you make use of heraldic terms! Where did you study heraldry?"

"In your service, Excellency, where one learns everything."

"Go on; I am curious to know two things."

"What are they, Monseigneur?"

"What became of this little boy? for I think you told me it was a boy, M. Bertuccio."

"No, Excellency, I do not recollect telling you that."

"I thought you did; I was mistaken."

"No, you were not, for it was in fact a little boy. But your Excellency wished to know two things; what was the second?"

"The second was the crime of which you were accused when you asked for a confessor, and the Abbé Busoni came to visit you at your request in the prison at Nîmes."

"The story will be very long, Excellency."

"What matter? You know I take but little sleep; and I do not suppose you are very much inclined for it either."

Bertuccio bowed and resumed his story. "Partly to drown the recollections of the past that haunted me, partly to supply the wants of the poor widow, I eagerly returned to my trade of smuggler, which had become more easy by reason of that relaxation of the laws which always follows a revolution. The coasts of the South especially were poorly guarded, in consequence of the disturbances that were perpetually breaking out in Avignon, Nîmes, or Uzés. We profited by the kind of respite Government gave us to establish connections along the seaboard. Since my brother's assassination in the streets of Nîmes, I had never

entered the town; the result was that the innkeeper with whom we were connected, seeing we would no longer come to him, was forced to come to us, and had established a branch to his inn on the road from Bellegarde to Beaucaire, at the sign of the Pont du Gard. We had thus, in the direction of Aigues-Mortes, Martiques, and at Bouc, a dozen places where we left our goods, and where in case of necessity, we concealed ourselves from the gendarmes and custom-house officers. Smuggling is a profitable trade when a certain degree of vigor and intelligence is employed; as for myself, brought up in the mountains, I had a double motive for fearing the gendarmes and custom-house officers, — as my appearance before the judges would cause an inquiry, and an inquiry always looks back into the past. And in my past life they might find something far more grave than the selling of smuggled cigars or barrels of brandy, without a permit. So preferring death to capture, I accomplished the most astonishing deeds, which more than once showed me that the too great care we take of our bodies is almost the only obstacle to the success of those projects which require a rapid decision and vigorous and determined execution. In fact, when you have once devoted your life, you are no longer the equal of other men, or rather, other men are no longer your equals; and whosoever has taken this resolution feels at once that his strength is ten times as great, and that his horizon is enlarged."

"Philosophy, M. Bertuccio!" interrupted the count; "you have done a little of everything in your life."

"Oh, your pardon, Excellency."

"No, no; but philosophy at half-past ten at night is somewhat late. Yet I have no other observation to make, except that what you say is correct, which is more than can be said for all philosophy."

"My journeys became more and more extensive and more productive. Assunta took care of all, and our little fortune increased. One day when I was setting off on an expedition, 'Go,' said she; 'at your return I will give you a surprise.' I questioned her, but in vain; she would tell me nothing, and I departed. Our expedition lasted nearly six weeks. We had been to Lucca to take in oil, to Leghorn for English cottons; and we landed our cargo without opposition, took our profits, and returned home full of joy. When I entered the house the first thing I beheld in the centre of Assunta's chamber was a cradle that might be called sumptuous compared with the rest of the furniture, and in it a baby of seven or eight months old. I uttered a cry of joy; the only moments of sadness I had known since the assassination of the *procureur du roi* were caused by the recollection that I had abandoned this child. For the assassination itself I had never felt any remorse. Poor Assunta had divined all. She had profited by my absence, and furnished with the half of the linen, and having written down the day and hour at which I had deposited the child at the hospital, had set off for Paris and had reclaimed it. No objection was raised, and the infant was given up to her. Ah, I confess, Monsieur the Count, when I saw this poor creature sleeping peacefully in its cradle, I felt my eyes filled with tears. 'Ah, Assunta,' cried I, 'you are an excellent woman, and Heaven will bless you.'"

"This," said Monte Cristo, "is less correct than your philosophy; it is true that this is only faith."

"Alas! your Excellency is right," replied Bertuccio, "and God made this infant the instrument of our punishment. Never did a perverse nature declare itself more prematurely; and yet it was not owing to any fault in his bringing up. He was a most lovely child, with large blue

eyer of that deep color that harmonizes so well with the general fairness of the complexion; only his hair, which was too light, gave his face a singular expression, which redoubled the vivacity of his look and the malice of his smile. Unfortunately, there is a proverb that says that 'red is either altogether good or altogether bad.' The proverb was but too correct as regarded Benedetto; and even in his infancy he manifested the worst disposition. It is true that the indulgence of his mother encouraged him. This child, for whom my poor sister would go to the town five or six leagues off to purchase the earliest fruits and the most tempting sweetmeats, preferred to the oranges of Palma or the preserves of Genoa the chestnuts stolen from a neighbor's orchard or the dried apples in his loft, although he could eat as well of the nuts and apples that grew in my garden. One day when Benedetto was about five or six, our neighbor Wasilio, who, according to the custom of the country, never locked up his purse or his valuables, — for, as your Excellency knows, there are no thieves in Corsica, — complained that he had lost a louis out of his purse; we thought he must have made a mistake in counting his money, but he persisted in the accuracy of his statement. That day Benedetto, who had left the house in the morning to our great anxiety, did not return until late in the evening, when we saw him approach dragging a monkey after him, which he said he had found chained to the foot of a tree. For more than a month the mischievous child, who knew not what to wish for, had taken it into his head to have a monkey. A boatman who had passed by Rogliano, and who had several of these animals, whose tricks had greatly diverted him, had doubtless suggested this idea to him. 'Monkeys are not found in our woods chained to trees,' said I; 'confess how you obtained this animal.' Benedetto ad-

hered to his falsehood, and accompanied it with details than did more honor to his imagination than to his veracity. I became angry; he began to laugh. I threatened to strike him, and he made two steps backwards. 'You cannot beat me,' said he; 'you have no right, for you are not my father.'

"We never knew who had revealed this fatal secret, which we had so carefully concealed from him; however, it was this answer, in which the child's whole character revealed itself, that almost terrified me, and my arm fell without touching him. The boy triumphed; and this victory rendered him so audacious that all the money of Assunta, whose affection for him seemed to increase as he became more unworthy of it, was spent in caprices she knew not how to contend against, and follies she had not the courage to prevent. When I was at Rogliano everything went on properly; but no sooner was my back turned than Benedetto became master, and everything went wrong. When he was only eleven he chose his companions from among the young men of eighteen or twenty, the worst characters in Bastia, or indeed in Corsica; and they had already for some pieces of mischief been several times threatened with a prosecution. I became alarmed, as any prosecution might be attended with serious consequences. I was compelled at this period to leave Corsica on an important expedition; I reflected for a long time, and with the hope of averting some impending misfortune, I resolved that Benedetto should accompany me. I hoped that the active and laborious life of a smuggler, with the severe discipline on board, would have a salutary effect on his character, well-nigh, if not quite corrupted. I spoke to Benedetto alone and proposed to him to accompany me, endeavoring to tempt him by all the promises most likely to dazzle a twelve years old

He heard me patiently, and when I had finished, burst out laughing.

"'Are you mad, Uncle?' (He called me by this name when he was in a good humor.) 'Do you think I am going to change the life I lead for your mode of existence, — my agreeable indolence for the hard and precarious toil you impose on yourself? exposed to the bitter frost at night and the scorching heat by day, compelled to conceal yourself, and when you are perceived, to receive a volley of balls, — and all to earn a paltry sum? Why, I have as much money as I want; Mother Assunta always furnishes me when I ask for it! You see that I should be a fool to accept your offer.' I was stupefied by such audacity and such reasoning. Benedetto rejoined his associates; and I saw him from a distance point me out to them as a fool."

"Sweet child!" murmured Monte Cristo.

"Oh! had he been my own son," replied Bertuccio, "or even my nephew, I would have brought him back to the right road, for the knowledge that you are doing your duty gives you strength; but the idea that I was striking a child whose father I had killed made it impossible for me to punish him. I gave my sister, who constantly defended the unfortunate boy, good advice; and as she confessed that she had several times missed money to a considerable amount, I showed her a safe place in which to conceal our little treasure for the future. My mind was already made up: Benedetto could read, write, and cipher perfectly, — for when the fit seized him, he learned more in a day than others in a week; my intention was to enter him as clerk in some ship, and without letting him know anything of my plan, to convey him some morning on board. After I should have done that, and recommended him to the cap-

tain, his future would depend upon himself. I set off for

after having fixed upon the plan. All our cargo

was to be landed in the Gulf of Lyons; and these operations were becoming more and more difficult, for we were in 1829. Tranquillity was completely re-established, and the vigilance of the custom-house officers was redoubled; and their strictness was increased at this time in consequence of the fair of Beaucaire, which had just opened.

"Our expedition was successfully started. We anchored our vessel, which had a double hold in which our goods were concealed, amid a number of other vessels that bordered the banks of the Rhone from Beaucaire to Arles. On our arrival there we began to discharge our cargo in the night, and to convey it into the town by the help of the innkeepers with whom we were connected. Whether success rendered us imprudent, or whether we were betrayed, I know not; but one evening, about five o'clock, our little cabin-boy hastened, breathless, to inform us that he had seen a detachment of custom-house officers advancing in our direction. It was not their vicinity that alarmed us, — for detachments were constantly patrolling along the banks of the Rhone, — but the care, according to the boy's account, which they took to avoid being seen. In an instant we were on the alert; but it was too late. Our vessel was surrounded, and among the custom-house officers I observed several gendarmes; and as terrified at the sight of their uniforms as I was brave at the sight of any other, I sprang into the hold, opened a port, and dropped into the river, dived, and only rose at intervals to breathe, until I reached a cutting that led from the Rhone to the canal that runs from Beaucaire to Aigues-Mortes. I was now safe, for I could swim along the cutting without being seen, and I reached the canal in safety; I had designedly taken this direction. I have already told your Excellency of an innkeeper of Nimes who had set up a little inn on the road from Bellegarde to Beaucaire."

"Yes," said Monte Cristo, "I perfectly recollect him; I think he was your associate."

"Precisely," answered Bertuccio; "but he had, seven or eight years before this period, sold his establishment to a tailor at Marseilles, who, having almost ruined himself in his old trade, wished to make his fortune in another. Of course we made the same arrangements with the new landlord that we had with the old; and it was of this man that I intended to ask shelter."

"What was his name?" then inquired the count, who seemed to become somewhat interested in Bertuccio's story.

"Gaspard Caderousse; he had married a woman from the village of Carconte, and whom we did not know by any other name than that of her village. She was suffering from the marsh-fever, and seemed dying by inches. As for her husband, he was a strapping fellow, forty or forty-five years old, who had more than once in time of danger given ample proof of his presence of mind and courage."

"And you say," interrupted Monte Cristo, "that this took place towards the year —"

"1829, Monsieur the Count."

"In what month?"

"June."

"The beginning or the end?"

"The evening of the 3d."

"Ah," said Monte Cristo, "the evening of the 3d of June, 1829. Go on."

"It was from Caderousse that I intended demanding shelter; and as we never entered by the door that opened on to the road, I resolved not to break through the rule, climbing over the garden hedge, I crept among the and wild fig trees. And fearing that Caderousse ave some one there, I entered a kind of shed in

which I had often passed the night, and which was separated from the inn only by a partition in which holes had been made in order to enable us to watch an opportunity of announcing our presence. My intention was, if Caderousse was alone, to acquaint him with my arrival, finish the meal the custom-house officers had interrupted, and profit by the threatened storm to return to the Rhone and ascertain the state of our vessel and its crew. I stepped into the shed; and it was fortunate I did so, for at that moment Caderousse entered with a stranger.

"I waited patiently, not to overhear what they said, but because I could do nothing else; besides, the same thing had occurred often before. The man who was with Caderousse was evidently a stranger to the south of France; he was one of those merchants who come to sell jewelry at the fair of Beaucaire, and who during the month the fair lasts, when there is so great an influx of merchants and customers from all parts of Europe, often have dealings to the amount of one hundred thousand to one hundred and fifty thousand livres. Caderousse entered hastily. Then, seeing that the room was, as usual, empty and only guarded by the dog, he called to his wife. 'Holloa, Carconte!' said he, 'the worthy priest has not deceived us; the diamond is real.' An exclamation of joy was heard; and the staircase creaked beneath a feeble step. 'What do you say?' asked his wife, pale as death. 'I say that the diamond is real, and that this gentleman, one of the first jewellers of Paris, will give us fifty thousand livres for it. Only, in order to satisfy himself that it really belongs to us, he wishes you to relate to him, as I have done already, the miraculous manner in which the diamond came into our possession. In the mean time, please to sit down, Monsieur, and I will bring you some refreshment.'

"The jeweller examined attentively the interior of the inn and observed the visible poverty of the persons who were about to sell him a diamond that seemed to have come from the casket of a prince. 'Relate your story, Madame,' said he, wishing no doubt to profit by the absence of the husband, so that the latter could not influence the wife's story, and to see if the two recitals tallied. 'Oh!' returned she, 'it was a gift of Heaven, which we were far from expecting! My husband was a great friend, in 1814 or 1815, of a sailor named Edmond Dantès. This poor fellow, whom Caderousse had forgotten, had not forgotten him; and at his death he bequeathed this diamond to him.' 'But how did he obtain it?' asked the jeweller; 'had he it before he was imprisoned?' 'No, Monsieur; but it appears that in prison he made the acquaintance of a rich Englishman. And as in prison he fell sick, and Dantès took the same care of him as if he had been his brother, the Englishman, when he was set free, gave this stone to Dantès, who, less fortunate, died, and in his turn left it us, and charged the excellent abbé who was here this morning to deliver it.' 'The same story!' muttered the jeweller; 'and improbable as it seems at first, the history may be true. There's only the price we are not agreed about.' 'How not agreed about?' said Caderousse. 'I thought we agreed for the price I asked.' 'That is,' replied the jeweller, 'I offered forty thousand livres.' 'Forty thousand!' cried La Carconte; 'we will not part with it for that sum. The abbé told us it was worth fifty thousand without the setting.' 'What was the abbé's name?' asked the indefatigable questioner. 'The Abbé Busoni,' said La Carconte. 'He was a foreigner?' 'An Italian, from the neighborhood of Mantua, I believe.' 'Let me see this diamond again,' replied the jeweller; 'the first time you are often mistaken as to the

value of a stone.' Caderousse took from his pocket a small case of black shagreen, opened, and gave it to the jeweller. At the sight of the diamond, which was as large as a hazel-nut, La Carconte's eyes sparkled with cupidity."

"And what did you think of this fine story, eavesdropper?" said Monte Cristo; "did you credit it?"

"Yes, your Excellency. I did not look on Caderousse as a bad man, and I thought him incapable of committing a crime, or even a theft."

"That did more honor to your heart than to your experience, M. Bertuccio. Had you known this Edmond Dantès, of whom they spoke?"

"No, your Excellency, I had never heard of him before, and never but once afterwards; and that was from the Abbé Busoni himself, when I saw him in the prison at Nîmes."

"Go on."

"The jeweller took the ring; and drawing from his pocket a pair of steel pliers and a small set of copper scales, taking the stone out of its setting, he weighed it carefully. 'I will give you forty-five thousand,' said he, 'but not a half-penny more; besides, as that is the exact value of the stone, I brought just that sum with me.' 'Oh, that 's no matter,' replied Caderousse, 'I will go back with you to fetch the other five thousand livres. 'No,' returned the jeweller, giving back the diamond and the ring to Caderousse, — 'no, it is worth no more; and I am sorry I offered so much, for the stone has a flaw in it, which I had not seen. However, I will not go from my word, and I will give forty-five thousand.' 'At least, replace the diamond in the ring,' said La Carconte, sharply. 'Ah, true,' replied the [illegible] he reset the stone. 'N[illegible]e box in his

pocket, 'some one else will purchase it.' 'Yes,' continued the jeweller; 'but some one else will not be so easy as I am, or content himself with the same story. It is not natural that a man like you should possess such a diamond. He will inform against you. You will have to find the Abbé Busoni; and abbés who give diamonds worth two thousand louis are rare. Justice would seize it, and put you in prison; if at the end of three or four months you are set at liberty, the ring will be lost, or a false stone, worth three livres, will be given you, instead of a diamond worth fifty thousand livres, perhaps fifty-five thousand, but which you must allow one runs considerable risk in purchasing.' Caderousse and his wife looked eagerly at each other. 'No,' said Caderousse, 'we are not rich enough to lose five thousand livres.' 'As you please, my dear sir,' said the jeweller; 'I had, however, as you see, brought you the money in bright coin.' And he drew from his pocket a handful of gold, which he made to sparkle in the dazzled eyes of the innkeeper, and in the other hand he held a packet of bank-notes.

"There was visibly a severe struggle in the mind of Caderousse; it was evident that the small shagreen case, which he turned and re-turned in his hand, did not seem to him commensurate in value with the enormous sum which fascinated his gaze. He turned towards his wife. 'What do you think of this?' he asked in a low voice. 'Let him have it; let him have it!' she said. 'If he returns to Beaucaire without the diamond, he will inform against us; and as he says, who knows if we shall ever again see the Abbé Busoni?' 'Well, then, so I will!' said Caderousse; 'so you may have the diamond for forty-five thousand livres. But my wife wants a gold chain, and I want a pair of silver buckles.' The jeweller drew from his pocket a long flat box, which contained several

samples of the articles demanded. 'Here,' he said, 'I am very plain in my dealings; take your choice.' The woman selected a gold chain worth about five louis, and the husband a pair of buckles worth perhaps fifteen livres. 'I hope you will not complain now?' said the jeweller. 'The abbé told me it was worth fifty thousand livres,' muttered Caderousse. 'Come, come; give it to me! What a strange fellow you are!' said the jeweller, taking the diamond from his hand. 'I give you forty-five thousand livres, — that is, two thousand five hundred livres of income, — a fortune such as I wish I had myself; and you are not satisfied!' 'And the forty-five thousand livres,' inquired Caderousse, in a hoarse voice, 'where are they? Come, let us see them!' 'Here they are,' replied the jeweller; and he counted out upon the table fifteen thousand livres in gold, and thirty thousand livres in bank-notes. 'Wait while I light the lamp,' said La Carconte; 'it is growing dark, and there may be some mistake.'

"In fact the night had come on during this conversation, and with the night the storm which had been threatening for the last half-hour. The thunder was heard growling in the distance; but neither the jeweller, nor Caderousse, nor La Carconte seemed to heed it, possessed as they were with the demon of gain. I myself felt a strange kind of fascination at the sight of all this gold and all these bank-notes; it seemed to me that I was in a dream, and as it always happens in a dream, I felt myself riveted to the spot. Caderousse counted and again counted the gold and the notes; then handed them to his wife, who counted and counted them again in her turn. During this time, the jeweller made the diamond play and sparkle beneath the ray of the lamp; and the gem threw out flashes of light which made him unmindful of those wh[illegible] — began to play in at

the windows. 'Well,' inquired the jeweller, 'is the cash all right?' 'Yes,' said Caderousse. 'Give me the pocket-book, La Carconte, and find a bag somewhere.'

"La Carconte went to a cupboard, and returned with an old leathern pocket-book from which she took some greasy letters and put in their place the bank-notes, and a bag in which were at the moment two or three crowns of six livres each, and which in all probability formed the entire fortune of the miserable couple. 'There,' said Caderousse; 'and now, although you have wronged us of perhaps ten thousand livres, will you have your supper with us? I invite you with good-will.' 'Thank you,' replied the jeweller; 'it must be getting late, and I must return to Beaucaire. My wife will be getting uneasy.' He drew out his watch, and exclaimed, '*Morbleu!* nearly nine o'clock! Why, I shall not get back to Beaucaire before midnight! Good-night, my dears. If the Abbé Busoni should by any accident return, think of me.' 'In another week you will have left Beaucaire,' remarked Caderousse, 'for the fair finishes in a few days.' 'True; but that is no consequence. Write to me at Paris, to M. Joannes, in the Palais-Royal, Stone Gallery, No. 45; I will make the journey on purpose to see him.'

"At this moment there was a tremendous clap of thunder accompanied by a flash of lightning so vivid that it quite eclipsed the light of the lamp. 'Oh, dear!' exclaimed Caderousse. 'You cannot think of going out in such weather as this.' 'Oh, I am not afraid of thunder!' said the jeweller. 'And then there are robbers,' said La Carconte; 'the road is never very safe during fair time.' 'Oh, as to the robbers,' said Joannes, 'here is something and he drew from his pocket a pair of small d to the muzzle. 'Here,' said he, 'are dogs d bite at the same time; they are for the

first two who shall have a longing for your diamond, Father Caderousse.'

"Caderousse and his wife again interchanged a meaning look. It seemed as though they were both inspired at the same time with some horrible thought. 'Well, then, a good journey to you!' said Caderousse. 'Thank you,' replied the jeweller. He then took his cane, which he had placed against an old cupboard, and went out. At the moment when he opened the door, such a gust of wind came in that the lamp was nearly extinguished. 'Oh!' said he, 'this is very nice weather; and two leagues to go in such a storm!' 'Remain,' said Caderousse; 'you can sleep here.' 'Yes; do stay,' added La Carconte, in a tremulous voice; 'we will take every care of you.' 'No; I must sleep at Beaucaire. So once more, good-night!' Caderousse followed him slowly to the threshold. 'I can neither see heaven nor earth!' said the jeweller, who was outside the door. 'Do I turn to the right or to the left hand?' 'To the right,' said Caderousse. 'You cannot go wrong; the road is bordered by trees on both sides.' 'Good; all right!' said a voice almost lost in the distance. 'Close the door,' said La Carconte; 'I do not like open doors when it thunders.' 'Particularly when there is money in the house, eh?' answered Caderousse, double-locking the door.

"He came into the room, went to the cupboard, took out the bag and pocket-book, and both began for the third time to count their gold and bank-notes. I never saw such an expression of cupidity as the flickering lamp revealed in the two countenances. The woman especially was hideous; the feverish tremulousness she usually had was redoubled; her countenance had become livid, and her eyes resembled burning coals. 'Why,' she inquired in a hoarse voice, 'did you invite him to sleep here to-

night?' 'Why?' said Caderousse, with a shudder; 'why, that he might not have the trouble of returning to Beaucaire.' 'Ah!' responded the woman, with an expression impossible to render; 'I thought it was for something else.' 'Woman, woman, why do you have such ideas?' cried Caderousse; 'or if you have them, why don't you keep them to yourself?' 'Well,' said La Carconte, after a moment's pause, 'you are not a man!' 'What do you mean?' added Caderousse. 'If you had been a man, you would not have let him go from here.' 'Woman!'. 'Or else he should not have reached Beaucaire.' 'Woman!' 'The road takes a turn,—he is obliged to follow it,—while alongside of the canal there is a shorter road.' 'Woman! you offend the good God! There! listen!' And at this moment there was heard a tremendous peal of thunder, while the livid lightning illumined the room; and the thunder, then rolling away to a distance, seemed to leave reluctantly the cursed abode. 'Jesus!' said Caderousse, crossing himself.

"At the same moment and in the midst of the silence so full of terror which usually follows claps of thunder, they heard a knocking at the door. Caderousse and his wife started and looked aghast at each other. 'Who's there?' cried Caderousse, rising and drawing up in a heap the gold and notes scattered over the table, and which he covered with his two hands. 'It is I!' shouted a voice. 'And who are you?' 'Eh, *pardieu!* Joannes the jeweller.' 'Well, and you said I offended the good God!' said Carconte, with a horrid smile, 'why, it is the good God who sends him back again.' Caderousse fell back, pale and breathless, in his chair. La Carconte on the contrary rose, and going with a firm step towards the door, opened it, saying as she did so, 'Come in, dear M. Joannes.' 'Upon my word!' said the jeweller, drenched with rain, 'it seems

as if I was not to return to Beaucaire to-night. The shortest follies are best, my dear Caderousse. You offered me hospitality, and I accept it, and have returned to sleep beneath your friendly roof.' Caderousse stammered out some words while he wiped away the damp that started to his brow. La Carconte double-locked the door behind the jeweller.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RAIN OF BLOOD.

"As the jeweller returned to the apartment, he cast around him a scrutinizing glance; but there was nothing to excite suspicion, if it did not exist, or to confirm it, if already awakened. Caderousse's hands still grasped his gold and bank-notes; and La Carconte smiled upon her guest as pleasantly as she could. 'Heyday!' said the jeweller, 'you seem to have had some fears respecting the amount of your receipts, since you go over them again after my departure.' 'No, no,' answered Caderousse; 'but the circumstances by which we have become possessed of this wealth are so unexpected as to make us scarcely credit our good fortune, and it is only by placing the actual proof of our riches before our eyes that we can persuade ourselves the whole affair is not a dream.' The jeweller smiled. 'Have you any other guests in your house?' inquired he. 'No,' replied Caderousse, 'we do not lodge travellers; we are so near the town that nobody would think of stopping here.' 'Then I am afraid I shall very much inconvenience you!' 'Oh, dear me, no! indeed, my dear Monsieur, you will not,' said La Carconte; 'not at all, I assure you.' 'But where will you manage to stow me?' 'In the chamber overhead.' 'But is not that your chamber?' 'Never mind that; we have a second bed in the room adjoining this.' Caderousse stared at his wife th much astonishment.

jeweller, meanwhile, was humming a song as he

stood warming his back by the fire which La Carconte had lighted in the fireplace to dry the wet garments of her guest. She also spread a napkin at the end of the table and placed on it the slender remains of their dinner, to which she added three or four fresh eggs. Caderousse had once more parted with his treasures; the bank-notes were replaced in the pocket-book, the gold put back into the bag, and the whole carefully locked in the strong-box. He then began pacing the room with a pensive and gloomy air, glancing from time to time at the jeweller, who stood steaming before the fire, and as soon as he got dry on one side, turning the other.

"'There,' said La Carconte, as she placed a bottle of wine on the table, 'supper is ready whenever you are inclined to partake of it.' 'But you are going to sit down with me, are you not?' asked Joannes. 'I shall not take any supper to-night,' said Caderousse. 'We dined very late,' hastily interposed La Carconte. 'Then it seems I am to eat alone?' remarked the jeweller. 'Oh, we shall have the pleasure of waiting upon you,' answered La Carconte, with an eager attention she was not accustomed to manifest even to guests who paid for what they took.

"From one minute to another Caderousse darted on his wife keen, searching glances, but rapid as the lightning-flash. The storm still continued. 'There! there!' said La Carconte; 'do you hear that? Upon my word, you did well to return.' 'Nevertheless,' replied the jeweller, 'if by the time I have finished my supper the tempest has at all abated, I shall make another attempt to complete my journey.' 'Oh,' said Caderousse, shaking his head, 'there is not the slightest chance of its abating; it is the *mistral*, and that will be sure to last till to-morrow morning.' He [illegible] 'Well!' said the [illegible] all I can say is,

so much the worse for those who are abroad.' 'Ah!' chimed in La Carconte, 'they will have a wretched night of it.'

"The jeweller began to eat his supper, and La Carconte continued to pay him the little attentions of a careful hostess. Ordinarily so whimsical and cross-grained, she had become a model of painstaking politeness. Had the jeweller been previously acquainted with her, a change so marked certainly would have surprised him, and would not have failed to excite in him some suspicion. Caderousse, meanwhile, continued to pace the room and seemed unwilling to look at his guest; but as soon as the stranger had completed his repast, he went to the door and opened it. 'The storm seems over,' said he. But as if to contradict his statement, at that instant a violent clap of thunder seemed to shake the house to its very foundation, while a sudden gust of wind, mingled with rain, extinguished the lamp he held in his hand. Caderousse shut the door and returned to his guest, while La Carconte lighted a candle by the smouldering ashes that glimmered on the hearth. 'You must be tired,' said she to the jeweller; 'I have spread a pair of white sheets on your bed. Go up to your room, and may you sleep well!'

"Joannes waited a moment to assure himself that the storm was not abating; and when he saw that the thunder and the rain were increasing, he bade his hosts good-night and ascended the staircase. He passed over my head, and I heard every step creak as he went up. La Carconte followed him with eager eyes, while Caderousse on the contrary did not even look in that direction.

"All these details, which since that time have been gathered up in my mind, made but little impression on when they were taking place before my eyes; in fact, had happened (with the exception of the story

of the diamond, which certainly did wear an air of improbability) appeared quite natural; but worn out as I was with fatigue, and fully purposing to proceed onwards as soon as the tempest abated, I determined to take advantage of the comparative silence and tranquillity that prevailed to obtain the refreshment of a few hours' sleep. Overhead I could accurately distinguish every movement of the jeweller, who, after making the best arrangements in his power for passing a comfortable night, threw himself on his bed, and I could hear it creak and groan beneath his weight. Insensibly my eyelids grew heavy; deep sleep stole over me; and having no suspicion of anything wrong, I sought not to shake it off. For the last time I looked in upon the room where Caderousse and his wife were sitting; the former was seated upon one of those low wooden stools which in country places are frequently used instead of chairs. His back being turned towards me, I could not see the expression of his countenance; neither should I have been able to do so had he been placed differently, as his head was buried between his two hands. La Carconte continued to gaze on him for some time in contemptuous silence; then shrugging up her shoulders, she took her seat immediately opposite to him. At this moment the expiring embers threw up a fresh flame from the kindling of a piece of wood that lay near; and a bright gleam was thrown on the scene and the actors in it. La Carconte still kept her eyes fixed on her husband; but as he made no sign of changing his position, she extended her hard bony hand and touched him on the forehead.

"Caderousse shuddered. The woman's lips seemed to move as though she were talking; but either because she spoke in an undertone, or because my senses were dulled by sleep, I did not catch a word she uttered. I could no longer even see except through a mist and with that un-

certainty in which perceptions are blended with dreams. Finally my eyes closed, and I lost consciousness. How long I had been in this unconscious state I know not, when I was suddenly aroused by the report of a pistol followed by a fearful cry. Unsteady footsteps sounded on the floor of the chamber, and the next instant a dull, heavy weight seemed to fall powerless on the staircase. I had not yet fully recovered my recollection when again I heard groans mingled with half-stifled cries, as if from persons engaged in a deadly struggle. A last cry, more prolonged than the others, which gradually was subdued to groans, effectually aroused me from my drowsy lethargy. Hastily raising myself on one arm, I looked around, but all was dark; and it seemed to me as if the rain must have penetrated through the flooring of the room above, for some kind of moisture appeared to fall, drop by drop, upon my forehead, and when I passed my hand across my brow, I felt it wet and clammy.

"To the fearful noises that had awakened me had succeeded the most profound silence, — unbroken, save by the footsteps of a man walking about over my head. The staircase creaked under his step. The man descended to the lower room, approached the fireplace, and lighted a candle. It was Caderousse, his face pale and his shirt red with blood. Having obtained the light, he hurried upstairs again, and once more I heard his rapid and uneasy step in the chamber above. Ere long he came below holding in his hand the small shagreen case, which he opened, to assure himself it contained the diamond, and seemed to hesitate as to which pocket he should put it in; then, as if dissatisfied with the security of either pocket, he deposited it in his red handkerchief, which he carefully rolled round his head. After this he took from his cupboard the bank-notes and gold he had put there, thrust

the one into the pocket of his trousers, and the other into that of his waistcoat, hastily tied up a small bundle of linen, and rushing towards the door, disappeared in the darkness of the night.

"Then all became clear and manifest to me; and I reproached myself with what had happened as though I myself had done the guilty deed. I fancied that I still heard faint moans; and imagining that the unfortunate jeweller might not be quite dead, I determined to go to his relief by way of atoning in some slight degree, not for the crime I had committed, but for that which I had not endeavored to prevent. For this purpose I applied all the strength I possessed to force an entrance from the cramped spot in which I lay to the adjoining room; the badly arranged planks which alone divided me from it yielded to my efforts, and I found myself in the house. Hastily snatching up the lighted candle, I hurried to the staircase; towards the middle of it I stumbled over a human body lying quite across the stairs. It was the body of La Carconte! The pistol I had heard had doubtless been discharged at the unfortunate woman, whose throat it had frightfully lacerated, leaving a gaping wound from which, as well as the mouth, the blood was welling in sanguinary streams. Finding the miserable creature past all human aid, I strode past her and ascended to the sleeping-chamber, which presented an appearance of the wildest disorder. The furniture had been knocked over in the deadly struggle that had taken place there; and the sheets, to which the unfortunate jeweller had doubtless clung, were dragged across the room. The murdered man lay on the floor, his head leaning against the wall, weltering in a gory stream, poured forth from three large wounds in his breast; in a fourth wound was a large kitchen-knife

"I stumbled over the second pistol, which had not been discharged, — the powder probably being damp. I approached the jeweller, who was not quite dead; and at the sound of my footsteps, causing as they did the creaking of the floor, he opened his eyes, fixed them on me for a moment, moved his lips as though trying to speak, and expired. This appalling sight almost bereft me of my senses; and finding that I could no longer be of service to any one in the house, my only desire was to get away. I rushed to the staircase, clasping my burning temples with both hands, and uttering cries of horror. Upon reaching the room below, I found five or six custom-house officers and two or three gendarmes, — an armed troop. They immediately seized me, and I did not even attempt any resistance; I was no longer master of my senses. I tried to speak, but could utter only inarticulate cries. I saw some of the party pointing at me, and lowered my eyes to look at myself; I was covered with blood. That warm rain that I had perceived falling on me through the staircase was the blood of La Carconte. I pointed with my finger to the place where I had been concealed. 'What does he mean?' asked a gendarme. One of the revenue officers went to the place I had indicated. 'He means,' replied the man, upon his return, 'that he effected his entrance by means of this hole,' showing the place where I had broken my way through the planks into the house.

"Then I understood that they took me for an assassin. I recovered my voice and my strength. I tore myself from the two men who held me, and cried out, 'It is not I! it is not I!' A couple of gendarmes held the muzzles of their carbines against my breast; 'Stir but a step,' said they, 'and you are a dead man!' 'Why should you threaten me with death,' cried I, 'when I have already declared my innocence?' 'You will tell your little story

to the judges at Nîmes. Meanwhile, come along with us; and the best advice we can give you is to do so unresistingly.' Resistance was far from my thoughts. I was utterly overpowered by surprise and terror; and without a word I suffered myself to be handcuffed and tied to a horse's tail, in which disgraceful plight I arrived at Nîmes.

"It seems I had been tracked by a *douanier*, who had lost sight of me near the inn; feeling assured that I intended to pass the night there, he had returned to summon his comrades, who arrived just in time to hear the report of the pistol, and to take me in the midst of such proofs of my guilt that I at once understood the difficulty I should have in proving my innocence. One only chance was left me, that of beseeching the magistrate before whom I was taken to cause every inquiry to be made for a certain Abbé Busoni, who had stopped at the inn of the Pont du Gard on the morning previous to the murder. If, indeed, Caderousse had invented the story relative to the diamond, and there existed no such person as the Abbé Busoni, then, indeed, I was lost past redemption unless Caderousse should be taken and should make a confession.

"Two months passed away in which — I ought to say in praise of my judge — search was everywhere made for the person I had desired to see. I had already lost all hope. Caderousse had not been taken. My trial was to come on at the approaching sessions; when, on the 8th of September, — that is to say, precisely three months and five days after the event, — the Abbé Busoni, whom I no longer hoped to see, presented himself at the prison, saying that he understood one of the prisoners wished to speak to him. [illegible] the affair at Marseilles, he [illegible]ith my desire. You

may easily imagine with what eagerness I welcomed him; I related to him the whole of what I had seen and heard. I felt some degree of nervousness as I entered upon the history of the diamond; but to my inexpressible astonishment, he confirmed it in every particular, and to my equal surprise, he seemed to place entire belief in all I stated. And then it was that, won by his mild charity, perceiving him acquainted with all the habits and customs of my own country, and considering also that pardon for the only crime of which I was really guilty might come with a double power from lips so benevolent and kind, I besought him to receive my confession, under the seal of which I recounted the affair of Auteuil in all its details. That which I had done by the impulse of my best feelings produced the same effect as though it had been the result of calculation. My voluntary confession of the assassination at Auteuil proved to him that I had not committed that of which I stood accused. When he quitted me, he bade me be of good courage, and rely upon his doing all in his power to convince my judges of my innocence.

"I had speedy proofs that the excellent abbé was engaged in my behalf, for the rigors of my imprisonment were gradually alleviated, and I was told that my trial was to be postponed to the assizes following those now being held. In the interim it pleased Providence to cause the apprehension of Caderousse, who was discovered in some distant country and brought back to France, where he made a full confession, attributing to his wife the conception and instigation of the deed. He was sentenced to the galleys for life; and I was immediately set at liberty."

"And then it was, I presume," said Monte Cristo, "that you came to me as the bearer of a letter from the Abbé Busoni?"

"It was, your Excellency; the benevolent abbé took an evident interest in all that concerned me. 'Your mode of life as a smuggler,' said he to me one day, 'will be the ruin of you if you persist in it; let me advise you when you get out of prison to choose something more safe as well as respectable.' 'But how,' inquired I, 'am I to maintain myself and my poor sister?' 'A person, whose confessor I am,' replied he, 'and who entertains a high regard for me, applied to me a short time since to procure him a confidential servant. Would you like such a post? If so, I will give you a letter of introduction to the friend I allude to.' 'Oh, *mon père*,' I cried, 'what goodness!' 'But you must swear to me that I shall never have occasion to regret my recommendation.' I extended my hand to take the oath. 'It is needless,' he said; 'I know and I like the Corsicans, — that is my reliance! Here, take this,' continued he, after rapidly writing the few lines I brought to your Excellency, and upon receipt of which you deigned to receive me into your service; and now I ask with confidence whether your Excellency has ever had cause to complain of me?"

"On the contrary, Bertuccio, I have ever found you faithful, honest, and deserving. One fault I find with you, and that is your not having placed sufficient confidence in me."

"Indeed, your Excellency, I know not what you mean!"

"Simply this; how comes it, that having both a sister and an adopted son, you have never spoken to me of either?"

"Alas! I have still to recount the most distressing period of my life. Anxious as you may suppose I was to behold and comfort my dear sister, I lost no time in hastening to Corsica; but when I [illegible] at Rogliano I found the hou[illegible] horrible

that the neighbors remember and speak of it to this day. Acting by my advice, my poor sister had refused to comply with the unreasonable demands of Benedetto, who was continually tormenting her for money as long as he believed there was a sou left in her possession. One morning when he had demanded money, threatening her with the severest consequences if she did not supply him with what he desired, he disappeared throughout the whole of the day, leaving the kind-hearted Assunta, who loved him as if he were her own child, to weep over his conduct and bewail his absence. Evening came; and still, with all the patient solicitude of a mother, she watched for his return.

"As the eleventh hour struck, he returned with two of his ordinary companions. As poor Assunta rose to clasp her truant in her arms, she was seized upon by three ruffians, and one of them — I shudder with the fear that it may have been that infernal child — cried out, 'Let us put her to the torture; she will then tell us where the money is.'

"It unfortunately happened that our neighbor, Wasilio, was at Bastia, leaving no person in his house but his wife; no one else could hear or see anything that took place within our dwelling. Two of the brutal companions of Benedetto held poor Assunta, who, unable to conceive that any harm was intended to her, smiled upon those who were soon to become her executioners. The third ruffian proceeded to barricade the doors and windows; then returning to his infamous accomplices, the three united in stifling the cries uttered by the poor victim at the sight of these alarming preparations. This effected, they put the brazier to Assunta's feet, expecting thus to compel her to

where our little treasure was concealed. In the

made by my poor sister her clothes caught fire.

and they were compelled to let go their hold in order to preserve themselves. Covered with flames, Assunta rushed wildly to the door; but it was fastened. She flew to the windows; but they were barricaded. Then her neighbor heard frightful cries, — Assunta calling for help. Then her voice was stifled; her cries subsided to moans; and on the following morning, when after a night of anguish and terror Wasilio's wife could muster up courage to venture abroad, she caused the door of our dwelling to be opened by the public authorities, and Assunta, although dreadfully burned, was found still breathing. Every drawer and closet in the house had been forced open, and everything worth carrying off stolen from them. Benedetto never again appeared at Rogliano, neither have I since that day either seen or heard anything concerning him.

"It was subsequently to these dreadful events that I waited on your Excellency, to whom it would have been folly to have mentioned Benedetto, since all trace of him seemed entirely lost; or of my sister, since she was dead."

"And what have you thought of that event?" inquired Monte Cristo.

"That it was a punishment for the crime I had committed," answered Bertuccio. "Oh, those Villeforts are an accursed race!"

"I believe it," murmured the count, in a melancholy tone.

"And now," resumed Bertuccio, "your Excellency may perhaps be able to comprehend that this place, which I revisit for the first time, this garden, where I have killed a man, might well excite in me those disagreeable emotions of which you desired to know the cause. For, in short, I am not sure but that before me, there at my feet, lies M. de Villefort in the grave which he had dug

"Everything, in fact, is possible," said Monte Cristo, rising from the bench on which he had been sitting; "even," he added in a low tone, "that the *procureur du roi* is not dead. The Abbé Busoni did right to send you to me; and you have also done well in relating to me your history, as it will prevent my forming any erroneous opinions concerning you in future. As for that Benedetto, who so grossly belied his name, have you never made any effort to trace out whither he has gone or what has become of him?"

"Never! If I had known where he was, instead of going to him I should have fled as from a monster. I have never heard his name mentioned by any person; I hope he is dead."

"Do not hope it, Bertuccio," said the count. "The wicked do not die so, for God seems to keep them in his care, that he may use them as instruments of his vengeance."

"So be it," said Bertuccio. "I ask only that I may never see him again. And now, Monsieur the Count," added the steward, bending humbly forward, "you know all; you are my judge on earth as the Almighty is in Heaven. Have you no words of consolation for me?"

"My good friend, I can say to you what the Abbé Busoni would say to you. Villefort, the man you killed, merited the punishment he received at your hands as a just reward for the wrongs he had done you, and it may be, for other crimes likewise. Benedetto, if still living, will become the instrument of some divine retribution, and then will be punished in his turn. As far as you yourself are concerned, I see but one point in which you are really guilty. Ask yourself wherefore, after rescuing the infant from its living grave, you did not restore it to [illegible]r. There was the crime, Bertuccio."

"True, Monsieur; there, as you say, I acted wickedly, for as to that I was a coward. My first duty, as soon as I had succeeded in recalling the babe to life, was to restore it to its mother; but in order to do so I must have made close and careful inquiry, which would in all probability have led to my own apprehension. And I clung to life, partly on my sister's account, and partly from that feeling of pride inborn in our hearts, which makes us wish to come off untouched and victorious in the execution of our vengeance. Perhaps, too, the natural and instinctive love of life made me wish to avoid endangering my own. Oh! I am not brave like my poor brother."

Bertuccio hid his face in his hands as he uttered these words, while Monte Cristo fixed on him a long and indescribable gaze. After a brief silence, rendered still more solemn by the time and place, the count said in a tone of melancholy wholly unlike his usual manner, "In order to end properly this conversation, which will be our last about these adventures, I will repeat to you some words I have heard from the lips of the Abbé Busoni himself; 'For all ills there are two remedies, — time and silence.' Now, M. Bertuccio, leave me to walk alone for a few moments in this garden. That which awakens painful emotion in you, an actor in that terrible scene, gives me a sensation almost pleasant and increases the value of this estate. The trees, you see, M. Bertuccio, are pleasant only as they make a shade; and the shade itself is pleasant only as it is filled with reveries and visions. Here I have bought a garden, thinking to buy a simple enclosure shut in by walls; but suddenly that enclosure becomes a garden full of ghosts, which were not mentioned in the contract. Now I like ghosts; I have never heard it said that so much harm had been done by the dead during six thous[illegible] the living in one

single day. Retire within, Bertuccio, and sleep in peace. Should your confessor be less indulgent to you in your dying moments than you found the Abbé Busoni, send for me if I am still on earth, and I will find words to soothe your soul as it makes ready to start on that rough voyage to what is called Eternity."

Bertuccio bowed respectfully and turned away, sighing heavily. When he had quite disappeared, Monte Cristo arose; and taking three or four steps onwards, he murmured, "Here, beneath this plane-tree, is where the infant's grave was dug. There is the little door opening into the garden. At this corner is the private staircase communicating with the sleeping-apartment. There will be no necessity for me to make a note of these particulars, for there before my eyes, beneath my feet, all around me, I have the plan sketched with all the living reality of truth."

After making the tour of the garden a second time, the count regained the house and re-entered his carriage; while Bertuccio, who perceived the thoughtful expression of his master's features, took his seat beside the driver without uttering a word. The carriage proceeded rapidly towards Paris.

That same evening, upon reaching his abode in the Champs Élysées, the Count of Monte Cristo went over the whole building with the air of one long acquainted with each nook or corner. Nor, although preceding the party, did he once mistake one door for another, or commit any error in choosing the proper corridor or staircase to conduct him to a place or suite of rooms he desired to visit. Ali accompanied him on this nocturnal inspection. Hav-
ven various orders to Bertuccio relative to the im-
nts and alterations he desired to make in the
e count, drawing out his watch, said to the atten

tive Nubian, "It is half-past eleven o'clock; Haydée will soon arrive. Have the French attendants been notified?"

Ali extended his hands towards the apartments destined for the fair Greek, which were so isolated that when the door was concealed behind tapestry one might go all over the house without suspecting that in that locality were a salon and two chambers, occupied. Ali, having pointed to the apartments, counted three on the fingers of his left hand, and then, placing it beneath his head, shut his eyes and feigned to sleep.

"I understand," said Monte Cristo, well acquainted with Ali's pantomime; "you mean to tell me that three female attendants are waiting in the sleeping-chamber."

"Yes," said Ali, by repeatedly nodding his head.

"Madame will be fatigued this evening," continued Monte Cristo, "and will no doubt wish to retire to rest immediately upon her arrival. Desire the French attendants not to weary her with questions, but merely to pay their respectful duty and retire. You will also see that the Greek servants hold no communication with those of this country."

Ali bowed. Just at that moment voices were heard hailing the *concierge*. The gate opened; a carriage rolled down the avenue, and stopped at the flight of steps leading to the house. The count descended, and presented himself at the already opened carriage-door. He offered his hand to a young woman completely enveloped in a mantle of green and gold. She raised the hand extended towards her to her lips, and kissed it with a mixture of love and respect. A few words passed between them in that sonorous language in which Homer makes his gods converse. The woman spoke with an expression of deep tenderness, while the count replied with an air of gentle gravity. Preceded by Ali, who carried in his hand a

candle of rose-colored wax, the woman, who was no other than the lovely Greek who had been Monte Cristo's companion in Italy, was conducted to her apartments, while the count retired to the pavilion reserved for himself. In another hour every light in the house was extinguished, and it might have been thought that all its inmates slept.

CHAPTER IX.

UNLIMITED CREDIT.

About two o'clock on the following day a *calèche*, drawn by a pair of magnificent English horses, stopped at the door of Monte Cristo, and a man dressed in a blue coat with buttons of the same color, a white waistcoat over which was displayed a massive gold chain, and brown trousers, with hair so black and descending so low over his eyebrows as to leave it doubtful whether it were not artificial, so little did its jetty glossiness assimilate with the deep wrinkles stamped on his features, — a man, in a word, who, although evidently more than fifty years of age, desired to be taken for not more than forty, bent forward from the carriage-door, on the panels of which were emblazoned the armorial bearings of a baron, and directed his groom to inquire at the porter's lodge whether the Count of Monte Cristo resided there, and if he were within. While waiting, the occupant of the carriage surveyed the house, the garden so far as he could distinguish it, and the livery of the servants who passed to and fro, with an attention so close as to be somewhat impertinent. The glance of this individual was keen, but evincing rather cunning than intelligence; his lips were straight, and so thin that as they closed they were compressed within the mouth, — in short, the size and prominence of his cheek-bones, — a never-failing proof of craftiness, — the flatness of his forehead, and the enlargement of the

back of his skull, which extended far beyond his large and vulgarly-shaped ears, combined to give, in the eyes of a physiognomist, a character almost repulsive to the face of that man, so highly respected by the people for his magnificent horses, the enormous diamond he wore on his shirt-front, and the red ribbon extended from one button-hole to the other of his coat.

The groom, in obedience to his orders, tapped at the window of the porter's lodge, saying, "Does not the Count of Monte Cristo live here?"

"His Excellency does reside here," replied the *concierge;* "but — " added he, glancing an inquiring look at Ali. Ali returned a sign in the negative.

"But what?" asked the groom.

"His Excellency does not receive visitors to-day."

"Then take my master's card, — M. le Baron Danglars! Be sure to give the card to the count, and say that in going to the Chamber my master came out of his way to have the honor of calling upon him."

"I do not speak to his Excellency," replied the *concierge;* "the *valet de chambre* will carry your message."

The groom returned to the carriage. "Well?" asked Danglars. The man, somewhat crestfallen by the rebuke he had received, detailed to his master all that had passed between himself and the *concierge.*

"Oh!" said the baron, "this gentleman is a prince, then, who must be called Excellency, and must not be approached but by his valet. However, it does not signify; he has a letter of credit on me, so I must see him when he requires his money."

Then, throwing himself back in his carriage, Danglars to his coachman, in a voice that might be heard "To the Chamber of Deputies!"

blinds of his pavilion, Monte Cristo,

warned in time, had seen the baron, and had studied him, by the aid of an excellent lorgnette, with no less scrutiny than M. Danglars himself had given to his examination of the house, the garden, and the liveries. "That fellow has a decidedly bad countenance," said the count, in a tone of disgust, as he shut up his glass into its ivory case. "How comes it that all do not retreat in aversion at sight of that flat, receding, serpent-like forehead, round, vulture-shaped head, and sharp-hooked nose, like the beak of a buzzard? Ali!" cried he, striking at the same time on the brazen gong. Ali appeared. "Summon Bertuccio!" said the count.

Almost immediately Bertuccio entered the apartment. "Did your Excellency desire to see me?" inquired he.

"I did," replied the count. "You no doubt observed the horses standing a few minutes since at the door?"

"Certainly, your Excellency; I noticed them for their remarkable beauty."

"Then how comes it," said Monte Cristo, with a frown, "that when I desired you to purchase for me the finest pair of horses to be found in Paris, there are in Paris two other horses as handsome as mine, and those horses are not in my stables?"

At the look of displeasure and the count's angry tones, Ali turned pale and held down his head. "It is not your fault, my good Ali," said the count, in the Arabic language, and in a tone of such gentleness as none would have given him credit for being capable of feeling, — "it is not your fault. You do not profess to understand the choice of English horses."

The countenance of Ali recovered its serenity.

"Permit me to assure your Excellency," said Bertuccio, "that the horses you speak of were not to be sold when I purchased yours."

Monte Cristo shrugged his shoulders. "It seems, Monsieur the Intendant," said he, "that you have yet to learn that all things are to be sold to such as care to pay the price."

"Monsieur the Count is not, perhaps, aware that M. Danglars gave sixteen thousand livres for his horses?"

"Very well! then offer him thirty-two thousand; a banker never loses an opportunity of doubling his capital."

"Is your Excellency really in earnest?" inquired the steward.

Monte Cristo looked at his steward as if astonished at the question. "I have to pay a visit this evening," replied he. "I desire that these horses, with completely new harness, may be at the door with my carriage."

Bertuccio bowed, and was about to withdraw; but when he reached the door, he paused and said, "At what o'clock does your Excellency intend to make that visit?"

"At five o'clock," replied the count.

"I beg your Excellency's pardon," interposed the steward, in a deprecating manner, "for venturing to observe that it is already two o'clock."

"I know it," was Monte Cristo's only reply. Then turning towards Ali, he said, "Let all the horses in my stables be led before the windows of Madame, that she may select those she prefers for her carriage. Request her also to oblige me by saying whether it is her pleasure to dine with me; if so, let dinner be served in her apartments. Now leave me, and desire my *valet de chambre* to come hither."

Scarcely had Ali disappeared when the valet entered the chamber.

"M. Baptistin," said the count, "you have been in my service one year, the time I generally give myself to judge of the merits or demerits of those about me. You suit

me very well." . Baptistin bowed low. "It only remains for me to know whether I also suit you?"

"Oh, Monsieur the Count!" exclaimed Baptistin, eagerly.

"Listen, if you please, till I have finished speaking," replied Monte Cristo. "You receive fifteen hundred livres per annum for your services here, — more than many a brave subaltern, who continually risks his life for his country, obtains. You have food such as many clerks and place-men who work ten times harder than you do would wish to have. Though yourself a servant, you have other servants who take care of your linen and your clothes. Besides your fifteen hundred livres of wages, you steal from me annually, upon the purchases you make for my toilet, fifteen hundred livres besides."

"Oh, your Excellency!"

"I am not complaining, M. Baptistin; it is reasonable. Nevertheless, I desire that to be stopped. You could find nowhere else a situation such as your good fortune has given you. I do not ill-use my people; I never swear; I do not put myself in a rage; I always pardon mistakes, — never negligence or forgetfulness. My orders are generally short, but clear and precise; I prefer to repeat them twice, or even three times, rather than have them imperfectly comprehended. I am rich enough to find out all that I want to know, and I give you notice, I am very curious. If, then, I learn that you have spoken of me kindly or unkindly, commented on my actions, or watched my conduct, you will leave me at that moment. I never warn my servants more than once. You are warned; go." Baptistin bowed and was proceeding towards the door. "I forgot to mention to you," said the count, "that I lay yearly aside a certain sum for each servant in my establishment; those whom I am compelled to dismiss lose, of course, this

money, while their portion goes to the fund accumulating for those domestics who remain with me, and among whom it will be divided at my death. You have been in my service a year; your fortune has been begun. Continue it."

This address, delivered in the presence of Ali, who stood wholly unmoved, produced an effect on M. Baptistin only to be conceived by those who have studied the character and disposition of French domestics. "I assure your Excellency," said he, "at least it shall be my study to merit your approbation in all things; and I will take M. Ali as my model."

"Pray do no such thing," replied the count, in the most frigid tone; "Ali has many faults mixed with most excellent qualities. Do not, then, take example from him, for Ali is an exception. He receives no wages; he is not a servant, — he is my slave, my dog. If he should fail in his duty I should not dismiss him, I should kill him."

Baptistin opened his eyes.

"Do you doubt it?" said Monte Cristo. He then repeated to Ali in the Arabic language what he had just been saying to Baptistin in French. The Nubian smiled assentingly to his master's words, then kneeling on one knee, respectfully kissed the hand of the count. This corroboration of the lesson he had just received put the finishing stroke to the stupefaction of M. Baptistin. The count then motioned to the *valet de chambre* to retire, and to Ali to follow him into his study, where they conversed a long time. At five o'clock the count struck thrice upon his gong. When Ali was wanted, one stroke was given; two summoned Baptistin, and three Bertuccio. The steward entered. "My horses!" said Monte Cristo.

"They are harnessed to the carriage, your Excellency. Monsieur the Count wish me to accompany him?"

"No, only the coachman, Ali, and Baptistin."

The count descended to the door of his mansion, and beheld his carriage drawn by the very pair of horses he had so much admired in the morning attached to the carriage of Danglars. As he passed them he said, "They are extremely handsome certainly, and you have done well to purchase them, although you were somewhat late."

"Indeed, your Excellency, I had much difficulty in obtaining them, and they have cost a large sum of money."

"Does the sum you gave for them make the animals less beautiful?" inquired the count, shrugging his shoulders.

"Nay, if your Excellency is satisfied, all is as I could wish it. Whither does Monsieur the Count desire to be driven?"

"To the residence of M. le Baron Danglars, Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin."

This conversation had passed as they stood upon the terrace, from which a flight of stone steps led to the carriage-drive. As Bertuccio was moving away, the count called him back. "I have another commission for you, M. Bertuccio," said he. "I am desirous of having an estate by the seaside in Normandy, — for instance, between Havre and Boulogne. You see I give you a wide range. It will be absolutely necessary that the place you may select have a small harbor, creek, or bay, into which my *corvette* can enter and remain at anchor. She draws only fifteen feet of water. She must be kept in constant readiness to sail immediately at whatever hour of day or night I give the signal. Make the requisite inquiries for a place of this description; and when you have met with an eligible spot, visit it, and if it possess the advantages desired, purchase it at once in your own name. The *corvette* must now, I think, be on her way to [illegible], is she not?"

"Certainly, your Excellency; I saw her put to sea the same evening we quitted Marseilles."

"And the yacht?"

"Was ordered to remain at Martigues."

"'Tis well! I wish you to write from time to time to the captains in charge of the two vessels so as to keep them on the alert."

"And the steamboat? Has your Excellency any orders to give respecting her?"

"She is at Châlons, is she not?"

"Yes."

"The same orders as for the two sailing-vessels."

"I understand."

"When you have purchased the estate I desire, I mean to establish relays at intervals of ten leagues on the road to the north and on the road to the south."

"Your Excellency may fully depend upon me."

The count gave an approving smile, descended the terrace steps, and sprang into his carriage, which, drawn by the beautiful animals so expensively purchased, was whirled along with incredible swiftness, and stopped only before the hotel of the banker. Danglars was engaged at that moment, presiding over a railroad committee. But the meeting was nearly concluded when the name of his visitor was announced. As the count's title sounded on his ear, he rose, and addressing his colleagues, many of whom were members of one Chamber or the other, he said, "Gentlemen, I must beg you to excuse my quitting you thus; but, if you will imagine it, the house of Thomson and French, at Rome, have sent to me a certain Count of Monte Cristo, and have opened for him with me an unlimited credit. It is the drollest thing I have ever met with in the course of my extensive foreign transactions; you may readily suppose it has roused my curiosity.

I took the trouble this morning to call on the pretended count. If he were a true count he would n't be so rich. Monsieur was not to be seen! How does that strike you? Is n't that the style of royalty, or of a pretty woman giving herself out as Maître Monte Cristo? As for the rest, the house, situated in the Champs Élysées, and which, I am informed, belongs to him, appeared to me quite respectable. But an unlimited credit," continued Danglars, with his villanous smile, "makes the banker with whom it is opened very exacting. I hasten, then, to see our man. I think it is a hoax. But they don't know down there with whom they have to deal. He laughs best who laughs last."

Having delivered himself of this pompous address, uttered with a degree of energy that left him almost out of breath, the baron left his guests and withdrew to a salon finished in white and gold, which was much admired in the Chaussée d'Antin. He had ordered the visitor to be ushered into that room, expecting him to be overwhelmed by its dazzling splendor. He found the count standing before some copies of Albano and Fattore that had been passed off on the banker as originals, and which, though but copies, were entirely out of harmony with the gaudy gilding that covered the ceiling. The count turned as he heard the entrance of Danglars into the room. With a slight inclination of the head, Danglars signed to the count to be seated in an armchair covered with white satin embroidered with gold. The count obeyed.

"I have the honor, I presume, of addressing M. de Monte Cristo."

The count bowed. "And I am speaking to Baron Danglars, Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, and Member of the Chamber of Deputies," — [illegible] all the titles he had found on the baron's card.

Danglars felt all the irony contained in the address of his visitor. For a minute or two he compressed his lips as though seeking to conquer his rage ere he trusted himself to speak. Then, turning to his visitor, he said, "You will, I trust, excuse my not having called you by your title when I first addressed you, but you are aware we are living under a popular form of government, and that I am myself a representative of the liberties of the people."

"So much so," replied Monte Cristo, "that while preserving the habit of styling yourself baron, you have deemed it advisable to lay aside that of calling others by their titles."

"Upon my word," said Danglars, with affected carelessness, "I attach no sort of value to such empty distinctions; but the fact is, I was made baron, and also Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, in consequence of some services I had rendered Government, but — "

"You have relinquished your titles after the example set you by M.M. de Montmorency and Lafayette? Well, you cannot possibly choose more noble models for your conduct."

"Why," replied Danglars, embarrassed, "I do not mean to say I have altogether laid aside my titles; with the servants, for instance, — there I think it right to preserve my rank with all its outward forms."

"Yes, to your servants you are 'Monseigneur;' to journalists you are 'Monsieur;' and to your constituents 'citizen.' These are distinctions very proper under a constitutional government. I understand perfectly."

Danglars bit his lips; he saw that he was no match in an argument of this sort, and he has- jects more familiar to him.

ount," said he, bowing, "I have re-

ceived a letter of advice from Thomson and French, of Rome."

"I am glad to hear it, Monsieur the Baron, — for I must claim the privilege of addressing you as your servants do; it is a bad habit, acquired in countries where barons still are found, simply because they are no longer created. But as regards the letter of advice, I am charmed to find that it has reached you; it relieves me of the necessity of introducing myself, which is always embarrassing. You have, then, you say, received a letter of advice?"

"Yes," said Danglars; "but I confess that I do not quite understand it."

"Indeed?"

"And for that reason I did myself the honor of calling upon you, in order to beg you would explain some part of it to me."

"Do it now, Monsieur; I am here, and am prepared to understand you."

"Why," said Danglars, "in the letter — I believe I have it about me" — here he felt in his breast-pocket — "yes, here it is! Well, this letter gives M. le Comte de Monte Cristo unlimited credit on our house."

"And what is there that requires explaining in that simple fact, may I ask, Monsieur the Baron?"

"Nothing, Monsieur, but the word 'unlimited.'"

"Well, is n't that a French word? You know they are Anglo-Germans who wrote the letter."

"Oh, as for the composition of the letter there is nothing to say; but as regards reliability it is somewhat different."

"Is it possible," asked the count, assuming an air and tone of the utmost simplicity, — "is it possible that Thomson and French are not looked upon as safe and solvent

bankers? The devil! that is annoying, for I have considerable property in their hands."

"Thomson and French are bankers of the highest repute," replied Danglars, with an almost mocking smile; "and it was not of their solvency or capability I spoke, but of the word 'unlimited,' which in financial affairs is so vague—"

"That it is unlimited, do you mean?" cried Monte Cristo.

"Precisely what I was about to say," said Danglars. "Now, what is vague is doubtful; and says the wise man, 'where there is doubt there is danger!'"

"Meaning to say," rejoined Monte Cristo, "that though Thomson and French may be inclined to commit acts of folly, M. le Baron Danglars is not disposed to follow their example."

"How so, Monsieur the Count?"

"Simply thus: the banking-house of Thomson and Co. sets no bounds to its engagements, while that of M. Danglars has its limits; truly, he is as wise as the sage he just now quoted."

"Monsieur!" replied the banker, drawing himself up with a haughty air, "the amount of my capital or the extent and solvency of my engagements has never yet been questioned."

"It seems, then, reserved for me," said Monte Cristo, coldly, "to be the first to do so."

"By what right?"

"By right of the explanations you have demanded, which appear to betray hesitation."

Danglars bit his lips. It was the second time he had been defeated by this man, and this time on his own ground. His mocking politeness was an affectation, and touched upon the border which is so near to impertinence,

Monte Cristo, on the other hand, smiled with the best grace in the world, and exhibited, when he wished, a certain appearance of simplicity, which gave him many advantages.

"Well, Monsieur," resumed Danglars, after a brief silence, "I will endeavor to make myself understood by requesting you to inform me for what sum you propose to draw upon me?"

"Why, truly," replied Monte Cristo, determined not to lose an inch of the ground he had gained, "my reason for desiring an 'unlimited' credit was precisely because I did not know what amount of money I might wish to have."

The banker now thought the time had arrived for him to take the upper hand. Flinging himself back in his armchair, he said with an arrogant and purse-proud air, "Let me beg of you not to hesitate in naming your wishes. You will then be convinced that the resources of the house of Danglars, however limited, are still equal to meeting the largest demands; and were you even to require a million—"

"I beg your pardon," interposed Monte Cristo.

"I said a million," repeated Danglars, with a patronizing and pompous air.

"And what should I do with a million?" said the count. "Good heavens! Monsieur, if I wanted only a million I should n't need to open a credit for such a trifle. A million! I always carry a million in my pocket-book or in my dressing-case." And with these words Monte Cristo took from his pocket a small case containing his visiting-cards, and drew forth two orders on the treasury for five hundred thousand livres each, payable to the bearer.

It was necessary to crush, and not merely to sting a man like Danglars. The stroke of the club had its effect;

the banker shuddered and had an attack of vertigo. He stared at Monte Cristo with stupefied eyes whose pupils were frightfully dilated.

"Come," said Monte Cristo, "confess honestly that you have not perfect confidence in the responsibility of the house of Thomson and French. It is a simple matter. I foresaw that possibility; and although not a business man, I took certain precautions. Here are two other letters like the one addressed to you, — the one from the house of Arstein and Eskeles, of Vienna, to Baron de Rothschild; the other drawn by Baring, of London, on M. Laffitte. Now, Monsieur, you have but to say the word, and I will spare you all uneasiness on the subject by presenting my letter of credit at one of those two houses."

It was all over; Danglars was conquered. He opened, trembling visibly, the letter from Germany and that from London, which the count carelessly handed to him, and verified the authenticity of the signatures with a scrutiny which would have been insulting to Monte Cristo had it not proceeded from the banker's confusion.

"Oh, Monsieur! here are three signatures which are worth many millions," said Danglars, rising to salute the power of gold personified in the man before him. "Three unlimited credits on three houses! Pardon me, Monsieur the Count, but though no longer distrustful, I cannot help being astonished."

"Oh, a house like yours is not so easily astonished," said Monte Cristo, in his politest manner. "So you will be able to send me some money, will you not?"

"Speak, Monsieur the Count; I am at your orders."

"Why," replied Monte Cristo, "since we mutually understand each other, — for such, I presume, is the case?" Danglars bowed assentingly. "You are quite sure that not a lurking doubt or suspicion lingers in your mind?"

"Oh, Monsieur the Count!" exclaimed Danglars, "I never had any."

"No, no! you merely wished to be convinced you ran no risk, — nothing more; but now that we have come to so clear an understanding, and that all distrust and suspicion are laid at rest, we may as well fix upon a round sum for the first year, — say, six millions."

"Six millions!" gasped out Danglars. "Certainly, whatever you please."

"Then, if I should require more," continued Monte Cristo, in a careless, indifferent manner, "why, of course, I should draw upon you; but my present intention is not to remain in France more than a year, and during that period I scarcely think I shall exceed the sum I mentioned. However, we shall see. To make a beginning, please send me to-morrow five hundred thousand livres. I shall be at home until noon, and should I not be there, I will leave a receipt with my steward."

"The money you desire shall be at your house by ten o'clock to-morrow morning, Monsieur the Count," replied Danglars. "How would you like to have it, — in gold, silver, or notes?"

"Half in gold, and the other half in bank-notes, if you please," said the count, rising from his seat.

"I must confess to you, Monsieur the Count," said Danglars, "that I have hitherto imagined myself acquainted with all the great fortunes of Europe, and yet yours, which seems to be considerable, is wholly unknown to me. Is it recent?"

"No, Monsieur," replied Monte Cristo; "it is on the contrary of very ancient date. It is a sort of treasure forbidden to be touched for a certain period of years, during which the accumulated interest has trebled the capital. The period appointed by the testator for the

disposal of these riches occurred only a short time ago; and they have only been employed by me within the last few years. Your ignorance on the subject, therefore, is very natural. However, you will be better informed as to me and my possessions ere long." And the count, while pronouncing these latter words, accompanied them with one of those ghastly smiles that seemed so terrible to Franz d'Épinay.

"With your tastes and means of gratifying them," continued Danglars, "you will exhibit a splendor that must effectually put us poor little millionnaires quite in the background. If I mistake not, you are an admirer of paintings; at least I judged so from the attention you appeared to be bestowing on mine when I entered the room. If you will permit me, I shall be happy to show you my picture gallery, composed entirely of works by the ancient masters, — warranted as such. I cannot endure the modern school of painting."

"You are quite right in objecting to them, for they have generally one great fault, — that they have not yet had time to become old."

"Or will you allow me to show you several fine statues by Thorwaldsen, Bartoloni, and Canova, — all foreign artists? As you may perceive, I think but very indifferently of our French sculptors."

"You have a right to be unjust to them, Monsieur, — they are your countrymen."

"But all that may be postponed until we shall be better acquainted. For the present, I will confine myself, if agreeable to you, to introducing you to Madame la Baronne Danglars. Excuse my impatience, Monsieur the Count; but a person of your wealth and influence cannot receive too much attention."

Monte Cristo bowed in sign that he accepted the prof

fered honor, and the financier immediately rang a small bell, which was answered by a servant in a showy livery.

"Is Madame the Baroness at home?" inquired Danglars.

"Yes, Monsieur the Baron," answered the man.

"And alone?"

"No, Monsieur the Baron, Madame has visitors."

"Have you any objection to meet any persons who may be with Madame, or do you desire to preserve a strict incognito?"

"No, indeed," replied Monte Cristo, with a smile; "I do not arrogate to myself the right of so doing."

"And who is with Madame, — M. Debray?" inquired Danglars, with an air of good-nature that made Monte Cristo smile, acquainted as he was with the secrets of the banker's domestic life.

"Yes, Monsieur the Baron," replied the servant, "M. Debray is with Madame."

Danglars nodded his head, then turning to Monte Cristo, said, "M. Lucien Debray is an old friend of ours, and private secretary to the Minister of the Interior. As for my wife, I must tell you she lowered herself by marrying me, for she belongs to one of the most ancient families in France. Her maiden name was De Sevières, and her first husband was M. le Colonel Marquis de Nargonne."

"I have not the honor of knowing Madame Danglars; but I have already met M. Lucien Debray."

"Ah, indeed!" said Danglars; "and where was that?"

"At the house of M. de Morcerf."

"Oh! you are acquainted with the young viscount, are you?"

"We were together a good deal during the Carnival at Rome."

"Let me see; have I

not heard talk of some strange adventure with bandits or thieves hid in ruins, and of his having had a miraculous escape? I forget how; but I know he used to amuse my wife and daughter by telling them about it after his return from Italy."

"Madame the Baroness is waiting to receive you, gentlemen," said the servant, who had gone to inquire the pleasure of his mistress. "With your permission," said Danglars, bowing, "I will precede you, to show you the way."

"By all means," replied Monte Cristo; "I follow you."

CHAPTER X.

THE DAPPLED GRAYS.

The baron, followed by the count, traversed a long suite of apartments, in which the prevailing characteristics were heavy magnificence and the gaudiness of ostentatious wealth, until he reached the boudoir of Madame Danglars, — a small octagonal-shaped room, hung with pink satin covered with white Indian muslin. The chairs were of ancient workmanship and materials; over the doors were painted sketches of shepherds and shepherdesses, after the style and manner of Boucher, and at each side pretty medallions in crayons, harmonizing well with the appointments of this charming apartment, — the only one in the vast hotel in which any distinctive taste prevailed. In fact, it had been entirely overlooked in the plan arranged and followed out by M. Danglars and his architect, one of the most celebrated men of the day. The ornamental part of the finishing of Madame Danglars's boudoir had been left entirely to herself and Lucien Debray. M. Danglars, however, while possessing a great admiration for the antique as it was understood during the time of the Directory, entertained the most sovereign contempt for the simple elegance of his wife's favorite sitting-room, where, by the way, he was never permitted to intrude, unless indeed he excused his own appearance by ushering in some more agreeable visitor than himself. It was not therefore in reality Danglars who presented the visitor; on the contrary it was he who was presented. And his reception was cordial

or frigid, in proportion as the individual who accompanied him chanced to please or displease the baroness.

As Danglars now entered, he found Madame the Baroness (who, although past the first bloom of youth, was still strikingly handsome) seated at the piano, — a most elaborate piece of cabinet and inlaid work, — while Lucien Debray, standing before a small work-table, was turning over the pages of an album. Lucien had found time, preparatory to the count's arrival, to relate many particulars respecting him to Madame Danglars. It will be remembered that Monte Cristo had made a lively impression on the minds of all the party assembled at the breakfast given by Albert de Morcerf. That impression had not yet been effaced from Debray's mind, unsusceptible though he was; and the information which he had given the baroness about the count was modified by it. The curiosity of Madame Danglars, excited by the details formerly given by Morcerf, and by the new incidents related by Lucien, had therefore risen to a great height. That arrangement of piano and album was only one of those social deceptions by which the most serious precautions are concealed. A most gracious welcome and unusual smile were bestowed on M. Danglars; the count, in return for his gentlemanly bow, received a formal though graceful courtesy, while Lucien exchanged with the count a sort of distant recognition, and with Danglars a free and easy nod.

"Baroness," said Danglars, "give me leave to present to you the Count of Monte Cristo, who has been most warmly recommended to me by my correspondents at Rome. I need but mention one fact to make all the ladies in Paris court his notice, — he comes to Paris with the intention of remaining a year and spending six millions in that time! This sounds very much like an announcement of balls, fêtes, and picnic-parties, in all of which I trust Mon-

sieur the Count will remember us, as he may depend upon it we shall remember him in all the entertainments we may give, be they great or small."

Spite of the gross flattery and coarseness of this address, Madame Danglars could not forbear gazing with considerable interest on a man capable of expending six millions in twelve months, and who had selected Paris for the scene of his princely extravagance. "And when did you arrive here?" inquired she.

"Yesterday morning, Madame."

"Coming, as usual, I presume, from the extreme end of the globe? Pardon me; at least, such I have heard is your custom."

"Nay, Madame! this time I have come only from Cadiz."

"You have selected a most unfavorable moment for your first visit to our city. Paris is a horrible place in summer! Balls, parties, and fêtes are over; the Italian opera is in London; the French opera everywhere except in Paris. As for the Théâtre Francais, you know, of course, that it is nowhere. The only amusements left us are the indifferent races held in the Champ de Mars and Satory. Do you propose entering any horses at either of these races, Monsieur the Count?"

"I, Madame, propose to do whatever people do in Paris, if I have the good fortune to find some one who will inform me as to French customs."

"Are you fond of horses, Monsieur the Count?"

"I have spent a portion of my life in the East, Madame, and you are doubtless aware that the inhabitants of those climes value only two things, — the excellence of their horses and the beauty of their women."

"Ah, Monsieur the Count," said the baroness, "it would have been somewhat more gallant to have placed the women first."

"You see, Madame, how rightly I spoke when I said I required a preceptor to guide me into French customs."

At this instant the favorite attendant of Madame Danglars entered the boudoir; approaching her mistress, she spoke some words in an undertone. Madame Danglars turned very pale, then exclaimed, "I cannot believe it; the thing is impossible."

"I assure you, Madame," replied the woman, "it is even as I have said."

Turning impatiently towards her husband, Madame Danglars demanded, "Is this true?"

"Is what true, Madame?" inquired Danglars, visibly agitated.

"What my maid tells me."

"But what does she tell you?"

"That when my coachman was about to prepare my carriage he discovered that the horses had been removed from the stables without his knowledge. I desire to know what is the meaning of this?"

"Be kind enough, Madame, to listen to me."

"Oh! I will listen to you, Monsieur, for I am curious to know what you are about to tell me. These two gentlemen shall decide between us; but first I will state the case to them. Gentlemen," continued the baroness, "among the ten horses in the stables of M. le Baron Danglars are two that belong exclusively to me, — a pair of the handsomest and most spirited creatures to be found in Paris. But to you, at least, M. Debray, I need not give a further description, because to you my beautiful pair of dappled grays were well known. Well! just when I have promised Madame de Villefort the loan of my carriage to drive to-morrow to the Bois de Boulogne, behold, the two horses have disappeared. No doubt M. Danglars has sacrificed them to the selfish consideration of gaining some

thousands of paltry livres. Oh, what a villanous crowd these speculators are!"

"Madame," replied Danglars, "the horses were not sufficiently quiet for you; they were scarcely four years old, and they made me extremely uneasy on your account."

"Nonsense!" retorted the baroness; "you are well aware that I have had in my service for the past month the best coachman in Paris, — unless you have sold him with the horses?"

"My dear, I promise you another pair like them, — handsomer, if possible, — but more quiet and steady."

The baroness shrugged her shoulders with an air of ineffable contempt, while her husband, affecting not to observe it, turned towards Monte Cristo and said, "Upon my word, Monsieur the Count, I am quite sorry I was not sooner aware of your establishing yourself in Paris."

"And wherefore?" asked the count.

"Because I should have liked to make you the offer of these horses. I have almost given them away as it is; but, as I said, I was anxious to get rid of them. They were fit only for a young man."

"Monsieur," said the count, "I thank you; but this morning I purchased a very excellent pair of carriage-horses, sufficiently good, and not too dear. There they are. Come, M. Debray, you are a connoisseur, I believe, let me have your opinion upon them."

As Debray walked towards the window Danglars approached his wife. "I could not tell you before others," said he, in a low tone, "the reason of my parting with the horses; but an enormous price was offered me this morning for them. Some madman or fool, bent upon ruining himself as fast as he can, actually sent his steward to me to purchase them at a[illegible] is, I have *gained sixteen thous*[illegible]ome,

don't look so angry, and you shall have four thousand livres of the money to do what you like with, and Eugénie shall have two thousand." Madame Danglars surveyed her husband with a look of withering contempt.

"What do I see?" suddenly exclaimed Debray.

"Where?" asked the baroness.

"I cannot be mistaken; there are your horses! The very animals we were speaking of, harnessed to the count's carriage!"

"My dappled grays?" cried the baroness, springing to the window. "'T is indeed they!" said she. Danglars was stupefied.

"Is it possible?" cried Monte Cristo, with well-feigned astonishment.

Madame Danglars whispered a few words in the ear of Debray, who approached Monte Cristo, saying, "The baroness wishes to know what you paid her husband for the horses."

"I scarcely know," replied the count; "it was a little surprise prepared for me by my steward. They cost, I think, about thirty thousand livres."

Debray conveyed the count's reply to the baroness. Danglars looked so crestfallen and discomfited that Monte Cristo assumed a pitying air towards him. "See," said he, "how very ungrateful women are! Your kind attention in providing for the safety of the baroness by disposing of the horses does not seem to have made the least impression on her. But so it is; a woman will often from mere wilfulness prefer that which is dangerous to that which is safe. Therefore in my opinion, my dear baron, the best and easiest way is to leave them to their fancies,

hem to act as they please; and then if any

vs, why, at least, they have no one to blame

"

Danglars made no reply ; he was occupied in anticipations of the coming scene between himself and the baroness, whose threatening looks and frowning brow, like that of Olympic Jove, predicted a storm. Debray, who perceived the gathering clouds and felt no desire to witness the explosion of Madame Danglars's rage, suddenly recollected an appointment which compelled him to take his leave ; while Monte Cristo, unwilling by prolonging his stay to destroy the advantages he hoped to obtain, made a farewell bow and departed, leaving Danglars to endure the angry reproaches of his wife.

"Excellent!" murmured Monte Cristo to himself, as he retraced the way to his carriage. "All has gone according to my wishes. The domestic peace of this family is henceforth in my hands. Now, then, to play another master-stroke, by which I shall gain the heart of both husband and wife, — delightful! Still," added he, "amid all this, I have not yet been presented to Mademoiselle Eugénie Danglars, whose acquaintance I should have been glad to make. But never mind," pursued he, with his peculiar smile ; "that will come later. I am on the spot and have plenty of time before me."

With that reflection the count entered his carriage and returned home. Two hours afterwards Madame Danglars received a charming letter from the count, in which he entreated her to receive back her favorite dappled grays, protesting that he could not endure the idea of making his *début* in the Parisian world by disappointing a lovely woman. The horses were sent back, wearing the same harness they had worn in the morning ; but in the centre of each of the rosettes worn on the heads of the animals a diamond had been placed by order of the count.

To Danglars Monte Cristo also wrote, requesting him to excuse the whimsical gift of a capricious millionnaire, and

to beg of Madame the Baroness to pardon the Eastern fashion adopted in the return of the horses.

During the evening, Monte Cristo quitted Paris for Auteuil, accompanied by Ali. The following day, about three o'clock, a single blow struck on the gong summoned Ali to the presence of the count.

"Ali," observed his master, as the Nubian entered the chamber, "you have frequently told me how skilful you are in throwing the lasso."

Ali drew himself up proudly, and returned a sign in the affirmative.

"Very well. With your lasso you could stop an ox?"

Ali repeated his affirmative gesture.

"Or a tiger?"

Ali bowed his head in token of assent.

"A lion?"

Ali made the movement of one throwing a lasso, and then imitated the sound of strangling.

"I understand," said Monte Cristo; "you wish to tell me you have hunted the lion?"

Ali smiled with a triumphant air.

"But do you believe you could arrest the progress of two horses running away?"

The Nubian smiled.

"It is well," said Monte Cristo. "Ere long a carriage will dash past here, drawn by the pair of dappled gray horses you saw me with yesterday; now, at the risk of your own life you must manage to stop those horses before my door."

Ali descended to the street, and marked a straight line on the pavement immediately at the entrance of the house; then he returned and showed the line to the count, who was watching him. The count patted him gently on the back, his usual mode of praising Ali, who, pleased and gratified with the commission assigned him, walked calmly

towards a projecting stone forming the angle of the street and house, and seating himself thereon began to smoke his chibouque, while Monte Cristo re-entered his dwelling without further concern. But as five o'clock approached and the carriage was momentarily expected by the count, the indication of more than common impatience and uneasiness might be observed in his manner. He stationed himself in a room commanding a view of the street, pacing the chamber with restless steps, stopping from time to time to listen for the sound of approaching wheels, then to cast an anxious glance on Ali; but the regularity with which the Nubian puffed forth the smoke of his chibouque proved that he at least was wholly absorbed in the enjoyment of his favorite occupation. Suddenly a distant sound of rapidly advancing wheels was heard, and almost immediately a carriage appeared, drawn by a pair of wild, ungovernable horses, who rushed forward as though urged by the Devil himself, while the terrified coachman strove in vain to restrain their furious speed.

In the vehicle was a young woman and a child of about seven or eight years of age. Terror seemed to have deprived them even of the power to utter a cry, and they were clasped in each other's arms, as though determined not to be parted by death itself. The carriage creaked and rattled as it flew over the rough stones; and had it encountered the slightest impediment to its progress, it must inevitably have upset. The carriage kept the middle of the street, and cries of terror were uttered by those who saw it coming.

Then Ali, laying down his chibouque, drew the lasso from his pocket, threw it so skilfully as to catch the forelegs of the near horse in its triple fold, suffered himself to be dragged on for a few steps, by which time the tightening of the well-cast lasso had so completely hampered the

furious animal as to bring it to the ground; the horse fell on the pole and broke it, and prevented the other animal from pursuing his headlong way. Gladly availing himself of this opportunity, the coachman leaped from his box; but Ali had promptly seized the nostrils of the second horse, and held them in his iron grasp, till the maddened beast, snorting with pain, sank beside his companion. All this was achieved in much less time than is occupied in the recital. The brief space had, however, been sufficient for a man, followed by a number of servants, to rush from the house before which the accident had occurred. As the coachman opened the door of the carriage, this man assisted to alight from it a lady who was convulsively grasping the cushions with one hand, while with the other she pressed to her bosom her young companion, who had lost all consciousness of what was passing. Monte Cristo carried them both to the salon, and deposited them on a sofa. "Compose yourself, Madame," said he; "all danger is over."

The woman looked up at these words, and with a glance far more expressive than any entreaties could have been, pointed to her child, who still continued insensible.

"I understand the nature of your alarm, Madame," said the count, carefully examining the child; "but I assure you there is not the slightest occasion for uneasiness. Your little charge has not received the least injury; his insensibility is merely the effect of terror, and will soon cease."

"Are you quite sure you do not say so to tranquillize my fears? See how pale he is! My child! my Édouard! speak to your mother! Ah, Monsieur, send for a doctor! My fortune to him who restores to me my son!"

Monte Cristo signed to the distracted mother to lay aside her apprehensions; then opening a casket that stood near,

he drew forth a phial composed of Bohemian glass, containing a liquid of the color of blood, of which he let fall a single drop on the child's lips. Scarcely had it reached them ere the boy, though still pale as marble, opened his eyes, and eagerly gazed round him. At this sight, the delight of the mother was almost a delirium. "Where am I?" she exclaimed; "and to whom am I indebted for so happy a termination to my late dreadful alarm?"

"Madame," answered the count, "you are under the roof of one who esteems himself most fortunate in having been able to save you from a continuance of your sufferings."

"My wretched curiosity has brought all this about," pursued the lady. "All Paris rang with the praises of Madame Danglars's beautiful horses, and I had the folly to wish to try them."

"Is it possible," exclaimed the count, with well-feigned astonishment, "that these horses belong to Madame the Baroness?"

"Yes, Monsieur; do you know her?"

"Madame Danglars? I have that honor; and my happiness at your escape from the danger that threatened you is redoubled by the consciousness that I have been the unwilling and unintentional cause of all the peril you have incurred. I yesterday purchased these horses of the baron; but as the baroness evidently regretted parting with them, I ventured to send them back to her, with a request that she would gratify me by accepting them from my hands."

"Why, then you are the Count of Monte Cristo of whom Hermine has talked to me so much!"

"Yes, Madame," replied the count.

"And I am Madame Héloïse de Villefort." The count bowed with the air of a person who hears a name

first time. "How grateful will M. de Villefort be for all your goodness; how thankfully will he acknowledge that to you alone it is owing that his wife and child exist! Most certainly, but for the prompt assistance of your intrepid servant this dear child and myself must both have perished."

"Indeed, I still shudder at your peril."

"Oh, I hope you will allow me properly to recompense that man's devoted courage."

"I beseech you, Madame," replied Monte Cristo, "not to spoil Ali, either by too great praise or rewards. I cannot allow him to acquire the habit of expecting to be recompensed for every trifling service he may render. Ali is my slave, and in saving your life he was but discharging his duty to me."

"But he risked his life!" said Madame de Villefort, on whom the count's authoritative manner made a deep impression.

"His life, Madame, belongs not to him; it is mine, in return for my having myself saved him from death." Madame de Villefort was silent; perhaps she was absorbed in the contemplation of the singular individual who from the first had made so powerful an impression on her. During that interval of silence Monte Cristo scrutinized the features and appearance of the boy she kept folded in her arms, lavishing on him the most tender endearments. The child was small for his age, and unnaturally pale. A mass of straight black hair, defying all attempts to train or curl it, fell over his projecting forehead, and hung down to his shoulders, giving increased vivacity to eyes full of sly malice and juvenile wickedness. His mouth was large,

d not yet regained their color, were

t, the deep and crafty look, form-

r of the child's face, belonged

rather to a boy of twelve or fourteen years of age than to one so young. His first movement was to free himself by a violent push from the encircling arms of his mother, and to rush forward to the casket from which the count had taken the phial of elixir; then, without asking permission of any one, he proceeded in all the wilfulness of a spoiled child unaccustomed to restrain either whims or caprices to pull the corks out of the bottles.

"Touch nothing, my little friend," cried the count, eagerly; "some of those liquids are dangerous not only to taste, but even to smell."

Madame de Villefort became very pale, and seizing her son's arm, drew him towards her; but once satisfied of his safety, she also cast a brief but expressive glance on the casket, which was not lost upon the count. At this moment Ali entered. At sight of him Madame de Villefort uttered an expression of pleasure, and holding the child still closer towards her, she said, "Édouard, do you see that good man? He has shown very great courage and resolution, for he exposed his own life to stop the horses that were running away with us, and would certainly have dashed the carriage to pieces. Thank him, then, my child,—for had he not come to our aid, neither you nor I would be alive at this moment."

The child stuck out his lips and turned away his head in a disdainful and contemptuous manner, saying, "He 's too ugly!"

The count witnessed all this with internal satisfaction, and a smile stole over his features as he thought that such a child bade fair to realize one part of his hopes; while Madame de Villefort reprimanded her son with a moderation which certainly would not have satisfied Jean Jacques Rousseau had the little Édouard been called Émile.

"This lady," said the count, speaking to Ali in the

Arabic language, "is desirous that her son should thank you for saving both their lives; but the boy refuses, saying you are too ugly!"

Ali turned his intelligent countenance towards the boy, on whom he gazed without any apparent emotion; but the spasmodic working of the nostrils showed to the practised eye of Monte Cristo how deeply the Arab was wounded by the unfeeling remark.

"Will you permit me to inquire," said Madame de Villefort, as she rose to take her leave, "whether you usually reside here?"

"No, Madame," replied Monte Cristo; "it is a small place I have purchased quite lately. My place of abode is No. 30 Avenue des Champs Élysées; but I see that you have quite recovered from your fright, and you are no doubt desirous of returning home. Anticipating your wishes, I have desired the same horses you came with to be put to one of my carriages, and Ali — he whom you think so very ugly" — continued he, addressing the boy with a smiling air, "will have the honor of driving you home, while your coachman remains here to attend to the necessary repairs of your *calèche*. As soon as that important business is concluded, I will have a couple of my own horses harnessed to convey it direct to Madame Danglars."

"But I dare not return with those dreadful horses," said Madame de Villefort.

"You will see," replied Monte Cristo, "that in the hands of Ali they will be gentle and docile as lambs."

Ali had indeed given proof of this, — for approaching the animals, who had been raised to their feet with considerable difficulty, with a sponge soaked in aromatic vinegar he rubbed their foreheads and nostrils, covered with sweat and foam; and almost immediately they began to breathe noisily, and a shudder, lasting several seconds.

passed over their bodies. Then, undisturbed by the noisy crowd collected round the broken carriage, Ali quietly harnessed the pacified animals to the count's chariot, took the reins in his hands, and mounted the box; when lo! to the utter astonishment of those who had witnessed the ungovernable spirit and maddened velocity of the same horses, he was actually compelled to apply his whip in no very gentle manner ere he could induce them to start. And even then all that could be obtained from the celebrated dappled grays, now changed into a couple of dull, sluggish, stupid brutes, was a slow, pottering pace, kept up with so much difficulty that Madame de Villefort was more than two hours returning to her residence in the Faubourg St. Honoré. As soon as she arrived and had satisfied the first emotions of the family, she wrote the following letter to Madame Danglars: —

DEAR HERMINE, — I have just had a wonderful escape from the most imminent danger; and I owe my safety to the very Count of Monte Cristo we were talking about yesterday, but whom I little expected to see to-day. I remember how unmercifully I laughed at what I considered your eulogistic and exaggerated praises of him; but I have now ample cause to admit that your enthusiastic description of this wonderful man fell far short of his merits. But I must endeavor to render the account of my adventures somewhat more intelligible. You must know, then, my dear friend, that when I had proceeded with your horses as far as Ranelagh, they darted forward like mad things and galloped away at so fearful a rate that there seemed no other prospect for myself and my poor Édouard but that of being dashed to pieces against the first object that impeded their progress, when a strange-looking man, —an Arab or a Nubian, at least a black of some nation or other, —at a signal from the count, whose domestic he is, suddenly seized and stopped the infuriated animals, even at the risk of being trampled to death himself; and certainly he had a most wonderful escape. The count then hastened to us and carried

us into his house, where by some skilful application he speedily recalled my poor Édouard (who was quite insensible from terror) to life. When we were sufficiently recovered he sent us home in his own carriage. Yours will be returned to you to-morrow. I am afraid you will not be able to use your horses for some days; they seem thoroughly stupefied, as if sulky and vexed at having allowed this black servant to conquer them. The count, however, has commissioned me to assure you that two or three days' rest, with plenty of barley for their sole food during that time, will bring them back to a condition as flourishing — that is to say, as frightful — as they were in yesterday. Adieu! I cannot return you many thanks for the drive to-day; but after all, I ought not to blame you for the misconduct of your horses, more especially as it procured me the pleasure of an introduction to the Count of Monte Cristo; and certainly that illustrious individual, apart from the millions at his disposal, seemed to me a problem so curious and so interesting that I intend to study it at all hazards, — even at the hazard, if necessary, of another ride behind your horses. Édouard has supported the accident with admirable courage. He did not utter a single cry, but fell lifeless into my arms; nor did a tear fall from his eyes after it was over. You will still say that I am blinded by maternal affection; but there is a soul of iron in that poor little body so frail and delicate. Valentine sends many affectionate remembrances to your dear Eugénie, and with best love to her and yourself, I remain,

Ever yours truly,

HÉLOÏSE DE VILLEFORT.

P. S. — Do contrive some way for my meeting the Count of Monte Cristo at your house. I must see him again. I have just made M. de Villefort promise to call on him, and expect that he will return the call.

Nothing was talked of throughout the evening but the adventure at Auteuil. Albert related it to his mother; Château-Renaud recounted it at the Jockey Club; and Debray detailed it at length in the salons of the minister;

even Beauchamp accorded twenty lines in his journal to the relation of the count's courage and gallantry, which exhibited him as a hero before the eyes of all the fair members of the aristocracy of France. Many persons left their names at the hotel of Madame de Villefort with the design of renewing their visit at the right moment to hear from her lips all the circumstances of this romantic adventure. As Héloïse had predicted, M. de Villefort put on a black suit and a pair of white gloves, and ordered the servants attending the carriage to be dressed in their full livery, and forthwith drove to the hotel of the count, situated, as the reader is already informed, in the Avenue des Champs Élysées.

CHAPTER XI.

IDEOLOGY.

If the Count of Monte Cristo had lived for a very long time in Parisian society, he would have fully appreciated the significance of the step which M. de Villefort had taken. Standing well at court, whether the king regnant was of the elder or younger branch, whether the Government was Doctrinaire, Liberal, or Conservative; esteemed clever by all, just as we generally esteem those clever who have never experienced a political check; hated by many, but warmly protected by others, without being really liked by anybody, — M. de Villefort held a high position in the magistracy, and maintained his eminence like a Harlay or a Molé. His drawing-room, regenerated by a young wife, and a daughter by his first marriage scarcely eighteen, was still one of those well-regulated Paris salons where the worship of traditional customs and the observance of rigid etiquette were carefully maintained. A freezing politeness; a strict fidelity to government principles; a profound contempt for theories and theorists; a deep-seated hatred of ideality, — these were the elements of private and public life displayed by M. de Villefort.

M. de Villefort was not only a magistrate, he was almost a diplomatist. His relations with the ancient court, of which he always spoke with dignity and respect, made him respected by the new one; and he knew so many things that not only was he always carefully considered, but sometimes consulted. Perhaps this would not have

been so had it been possible to get rid of M. de Villefort; but like the feudal barons who rebelled against their sovereign, he dwelt in an impregnable fortress. This fortress was his post as *procureur du roi*, all the advantages of which he worked out marvellously, and which he would not have resigned but to be made Deputy, and thus to substitute opposition for neutrality. Ordinarily, M. de Villefort made and returned very few visits. His wife visited for him; and this was the received thing in the world, where they assigned to the heavy and multifarious occupations of the magistrate what was really only a calculation of pride, the essence of aristocracy, — in fact, the application of the axiom, "Pretend to think well of yourself and the world will think well of you," an axiom a hundred times more useful in our society than that of the Greeks, "Know thyself," — a knowledge for which we have substituted the less difficult and more advantageous science of knowing others.

For his friends M. de Villefort was a powerful protector; for his enemies he was a silent but bitter enemy; for those who were neither the one nor the other he was a statue of the law made man. With a haughty air, immovable countenance, look steady and impenetrable, or else insultingly piercing and inquiring, — such was the man for whom four revolutions, skilfully piled one on the other, had first constructed and afterwards cemented the pedestal on which his fortune was erected. M. de Villefort had the reputation of being the least curious and the least wearisome man in France. He gave a ball every year, at which he appeared for a quarter of an hour only, — that is to say, five and forty minutes less than the king is visible at his balls. He was never seen at the theatres, at concerts, or in any place of public resort. Occasionally, but seldom, he played at whist; and then

care was taken to select partners worthy of him, — some ambassador, archbishop, prince, president, or some dowager duchess. Such was the man whose carriage had just now stopped before the Count of Monte Cristo's door. The *valet de chambre* announced M. de Villefort at the moment when the count, leaning over a large table, was tracing on a map the route from St. Petersburg to China.

The *procureur du roi* entered with the same grave and measured step with which he would have entered a court of justice. He was the same man, or rather the completion of the same man, whom we have heretofore seen as deputy *procureur* at Marseilles. Nature, following up her principles, had changed nothing for him in the course she had marked out for him. From slender he had become meagre; from pale, yellow; his deep-set eyes were now hollow; and his gold spectacles, as they shielded his eyes, seemed to make a portion of his face. All his costume was black, with the exception of his white cravat; and this funereal appearance was varied only by the slight line of red ribbon which passed almost imperceptibly through his button-hole, and which appeared like a streak of blood traced with a pencil. Although master of himself, Monte Cristo scrutinized with irrepressible curiosity the magistrate, whose salute he returned, and who distrustful by habit and especially incredulous as to social marvels, was much more disposed to see in the noble stranger, as Monte Cristo was already called, a *chevalier d'industrie* who had come to try new ground, or some malefactor who had broken his prescribed limits, than a prince of the Holy See, or a sultan of the "Arabian Nights."

"Monsieur," said Villefort, in the tone assumed by magistrates in their oratorical periods, and of which they cannot or will not divest themselves in society, — "Monsieur, the signal service which you yesterday rendered to

my wife and son has made it my duty to offer you my thanks. Allow me, therefore, to discharge this duty and to express to you all my gratitude." And as he said this, the severe eye of the magistrate had lost nothing of its habitual arrogance. These words he articulated in the voice of a *procureur-général*, with the rigid inflexibility of neck and shoulders which caused his flatterers to say that he was a living statue of the law.

"Monsieur," replied the count, with icy coldness, "I am very happy to have been the means of preserving a son to his mother, — for they say that the sentiment of maternity is the most holy of all; and the good fortune which occurred to me, Monsieur, might have enabled you to dispense with a duty which in its discharge confers an undoubtedly great honor, — for I am aware that M. de Villefort is not lavish of the favor he bestows on me, but which, however estimable, is unequal to the satisfaction which I internally experience."

Villefort, astonished at this reply which he by no means expected, started like a soldier who feels a blow upon the armor he wears; and a curl of his disdainful lip indicated that from that moment he noted in the tablets of his brain that the Count of Monte Cristo was by no means a civil gentleman. He glanced around for something on which to resume the fallen conversation, which in falling seemed to have broken in pieces. He saw the map which Monte Cristo had been examining when he entered, and said, "You seem geographically engaged, Monsieur. It is a rich study, especially for you, who, as I learn, have seen as many lands as are delineated on this map."

"Yes, Monsieur," replied the count; "I have sought to make on the human race, taken as a mass, what you practise every day on individ[illegible] a physiological study. I have belie[illegible] the whole

to a part than to ascend from a part to the whole. It is an algebraic axiom which directs us to proceed from the known to the unknown, and not from the unknown to the known; but sit down, Monsieur, I beg of you."

Monte Cristo pointed to a chair, which the *procureur du roi* was obliged to take the trouble to move forward himself while the count merely fell back into his own, on which he had been kneeling when M. de Villefort entered. Thus the count was half-way turned towards his visitor, having his back towards the window, his elbow resting on the geographical chart which afforded the conversation for the moment,—a conversation which assumed, as had those with Danglars and Morcerf, a turn adapted to the persons if not to the situation.

"Ah, you philosophize," replied Villefort, after a moment's silence, during which, like a wrestler who encounters a powerful opponent, he took breath; "well, Monsieur, really, if like you I had nothing else to do, I should seek a more amusing occupation."

"Why, in truth, Monsieur," was Monte Cristo's reply, "man is but an ugly caterpillar for him who studies him through a solar microscope; but you said, I think, that I had nothing else to do. Now, really, let me ask, Monsieur, have you? Do you believe you have anything to do; or to speak in plain terms, do you think that what you do deserves being called anything?"

Villefort's astonishment redoubled at this second thrust so forcibly made by his strange adversary. It was a long time since the magistrate had heard a paradox so strong, or rather to say the truth more exactly, it was the first time he had ever heard of it. The *procureur du roi* exerted himself to reply. "Monsieur," he responded, "you stranger, and I believe you say yourself that a portour life has been spent in Oriental countries; so

that you are not aware how human justice, so expeditious in barbarous countries, takes with us a prudent and well-studied course."

"Oh, yes, — yes, I am, Monsieur; it is the *pede claudo* of the ancients. I know all that, for it is with the justice of all countries especially that I have occupied myself. It is the criminal procedure of all nations that I have compared with natural justice; and I must say, Monsieur, that it is the law of primitive nations, — that is, the law of retaliation, — that I have most frequently found to be according to the law of God."

"If this law were adopted, sir," said the *procureur du roi*, "it would greatly simplify our legal codes; and in that case the magistrates would not, as you have just observed, have much to do."

"It may perhaps come to this in time," observed Monte Cristo. "You know that human inventions march from the complex to the simple; and simplicity is always perfection."

"In the mean while," continued the magistrate, "our codes are in full force, with all their contradictory enactments derived from Gallic customs, Roman laws, and Frank usages, — the knowledge of all which, you will agree, is not to be acquired without lengthened labor; and it requires a tedious study to acquire this knowledge, and when it is acquired, a strong power of brain is necessary in order to retain it."

"I agree with you entirely, Monsieur; but all that even you know with respect to the French code, I know, not only in reference to that code, but as regards the codes of all nations. The English, Turkish, Japanese, Hindu laws are as familiar to me as the French laws; and thus I was right when I said to you that relatively — you know that everything is relative, Monsieur — that relatively to what

I have done, you have very little to do; but that relatively to all I have learned, you have yet a great deal to learn."

"But with what motive have you learned all this?" inquired Villefort, astonished.

Monte Cristo smiled. "Really, sir," he observed, "I see that in spite of the reputation which you have acquired as a superior man, you contemplate everything in the material and vulgar view of society, beginning with man and ending with man, — that is to say, in the most restricted, most narrow view which it is possible for human understanding to embrace."

"Pray, Monsieur, explain yourself," said Villefort, more and more astonished; "I really do — not — understand you — perfectly."

"I say, Monsieur, that with the eyes fixed on the social organization of nations, you see only the springs of the machine, and lose sight of the sublime Artisan who makes them act; I say that you do not recognize before you and around you any but those place-men whose brevets have been signed by the minister or the king; and that the men whom God has put above those titulars, ministers, and kings, by giving them a mission to follow out, instead of a post to fill, — I say that they escape your narrow view. It is thus that human weakness fails, from its debilitated and imperfect organs. Tobias took the angel who restored him to sight for an ordinary young man; the nations took Attila, who was doomed to destroy them, for a conqueror similar to other conquerors; and it was necessary for both to reveal their missions, that they might be known and acknowledged. One was compelled to say, 'I am the angel of the Lord;' and the other, 'I am the [illegible]d,' in order that the divine essence in both [illegible]ed."

Villefort, more and more amazed, and

really supposing he was speaking to a mystic or a madman, "you consider yourself as one of those extraordinary beings whom you have mentioned?"

"And why not?" said Monte Cristo, coldly.

"Your pardon, Monsieur," replied Villefort, quite astounded; "but you will excuse me if when I presented myself to you, I was unaware that I should meet with a person whose knowledge and understanding so far surpass the usual knowledge and understanding of men. It is not usual with us, corrupted wretches of civilization, to find gentlemen like yourself, possessors, as you are, of immense fortune, — at least, so it is said; and I beg you to observe that I do not inquire, I merely repeat, — it is not usual, I say, for such privileged and wealthy beings to waste their time in social speculations or in philosophical reveries, fitted at best to console those whom fate has deprived of the good things of this world."

"Really, Monsieur," retorted the count, "have you attained the eminent situation in which you are, without having admitted, or even without having met with exceptional beings; and do you never use your eyes, which must have acquired so much skill and certainty, to divine at a glance the kind of man who has come before you? Should not a magistrate be not merely the best administrator of the law, not merely the most crafty expounder of the chicanery of his profession, but a steel probe to search hearts, a touchstone to try the gold which in each soul is mingled with more or less of alloy?"

"Monsieur," said Villefort, "upon my word, you overcome me. I never heard a person speak as you do."

"Because you remain eternally encircled in a round of general conditions, and have never dared to raise your wing into those upper spheres which God has peopled with invisible or exceptional beings."

"And you allow then, Monsieur, that those spheres exist, and that these exceptional and invisible beings mingle with us?"

"Why should they not? Can you see the air you breathe, and without which you could not for a moment exist?"

"Then we do not see those beings to whom you allude?"

"Yes, we do; you see them whenever God pleases to allow them to assume a material form. You touch them, come in contact with them, speak to them, and they reply to you."

"Ah!" said Villefort, smiling, "I confess I should like to be warned when one of these beings is in contact with me."

"You have been served as you desire, Monsieur, for you have been warned just now, and I now again warn you."

"Then you yourself are one of these marked beings?"

"Yes, Monsieur; and I believe that until now no man has found himself in a position similar to mine. The dominions of kings are limited either by mountains or rivers, or a change of manners, or an alteration of language. My kingdom is bounded only by the world, — for I am neither an Italian nor a Frenchman nor a Hindu nor an American nor a Spaniard; I am a cosmopolite. No country can say it saw my birth; God alone knows what country will see me die. I adopt all customs, speak all languages. You believe me to be a Frenchman, for I speak French with the same facility and purity as yourself. Well, Ali, my Nubian, believes me to be an Arab; Bertuccio, my steward, takes me for a Roman; Haydée, my slave, thinks me a Greek. You may therefore comprehend that being of no country, asking no protection from any government, acknowledging no man as my brother, not one of the scruples that arrest the powerful, or the obstacles which

paralyze the weak, paralyzes or arrests me. I have only two adversaries, — I will not say two conquerors, for with perseverance I subdue even them, — they are time and space. There is a third, and the most terrible, — that is, my condition as a mortal being. This alone can stop me in my onward career, and before I have attained the goal at which I aim; all the rest I have taken into account. What men call the chances of fate, — namely, ruin, change, circumstances, — I have anticipated them all; and if any of these should overtake me, yet they will not overwhelm me. Unless I die, I shall always be what I am; and therefore it is that I utter the things you have never heard, even from the mouths of kings, — for kings have need of you, and other persons fear you. For who is there who does not say to himself in a society as incongruously organized as ours, 'Perhaps some day I shall have to do with the *procureur du roi*'?"

"But must you not say that, Monsieur? — for the moment you become an inhabitant of France, you are naturally subjected to the French law."

"I know it, Monsieur," replied Monte Cristo; "but when I visit a country, I begin to study, by all the means which are available, the men from whom I may have anything to hope or to fear, until I know them as well, perhaps better, than they know themselves. It follows from this that the *procureur du roi*, be he who he may, with whom I should have to deal would assuredly be more embarrassed than I should."

"That is to say," replied Villefort, with hesitation, "that human nature being weak, every man according to your creed has committed — faults."

"Faults or crimes," responded Monte Cristo, with a negligent air.

"And that you alone among men, whom you do not

recognize as your brothers, — for you have said so," observed Villefort, in a tone that faltered somewhat, — "you alone are perfect."

"No, not perfect," was the count's reply; "impenetrable, that 's all. But let us leave off this strain, sir, if the tone of it is displeasing to you; I am no more disturbed by your justice than you are by my second-sight."

"No, no, by no means," said Villefort, who was afraid of seeming to abandon his ground. "No; by your brilliant and almost sublime conversation you have elevated me above the ordinary level. We no longer talk; we discourse. But you know how the theologians in their collegiate chairs, and philosophers in their controversies, occasionally say cruel truths. Let us suppose for the moment that we are discussing social theology and theological philosophy; I will say to you, rude as it may seem, 'My brother, you sacrifice greatly to pride; you may be above others, but above you there is God.'"

"Above us all, Monsieur," was Monte Cristo's response, in a tone and with an emphasis so deep that Villefort involuntarily shuddered. "I have my pride for men, — serpents always ready to erect themselves against every one who may pass without crushing them. But I lay aside that pride before God, who has taken me from nothing to make me what I am."

"Then, Monsieur the Count, I admire you," said Villefort, who for the first time in this strange conversation applied that aristocratic formula to the unknown personage, whom, until now, he had only called *Monsieur*. "Yes; and I say to you, if you are really strong, really superior, really holy, — or impenetrable, which you were right in saying amounts to the same thing, — be arrogant, Monsieur, that is the characteristic of predominance. But you have *unquestionably* some ambition."

"I have had one, Monsieur."

"And what was it?"

"I too, as happens to every man once in his life, have been taken by Satan upon the highest mountain in the earth; and when there he showed me all the kingdoms of the earth, and as he said before, so said he to me, 'Child of earth, what wouldst thou have to make thee adore me?' I reflected long, for a gnawing ambition had long preyed upon me, and then I replied, 'Listen: I have always heard of Providence, and yet I have never seen him, nor anything that resembles him, or which can make me believe that he exists. I wish to be Providence myself, for I feel that the most beautiful, noblest, most sublime thing in the world, is to recompense and punish.' Satan bowed his head and groaned. 'You mistake,' he said; 'Providence does exist, only you have never seen him, because the child of God is as invisible as the parent. You have seen nothing that resembles him, because he works by secret springs, and moves by hidden ways. All I can do for you is to make you one of the agents of that Providence.' The bargain was concluded. I may have lost my soul; but what matters it?" added Monte Cristo. "If the thing were to do again, I would again do it."

Villefort looked at Monte Cristo with extreme amazement. "Monsieur the Count," he inquired, "have you any relatives?"

"No, sir, I am alone in the world."

"So much the worse."

"Why?" asked Monte Cristo.

"Because then you might witness a spectacle calculated to break down your pride. You say you fear nothing but death?"

"I did not say that I feared it; I only said that that alone could check me."

"And old age?"

"My end will be achieved before I grow old."

"And madness?"

"I have been nearly mad; and you know the axiom, *non bis in idem.* It is an axiom of criminal law, and consequently you understand its full application."

"Monsieur," continued Villefort, "there is something to fear besides death, old age, and madness. For instance, there is apoplexy, — that lightning-stroke which strikes but does not destroy you, and yet after which all is ended. You are still yourself as now, and yet you are yourself no longer; you who like Ariel touch on the angelic, are but an inert mass, which like Caliban touches on the brutal; and this is called in human tongues, as I tell you, neither more nor less than apoplexy. Come, if so you will, Monsieur the Count, and continue this conversation at my house, any day you may be willing to see an adversary capable of understanding and anxious to refute you, and I will show you my father, M. Noirtier de Villefort, one of the most fiery Jacobins of the French Revolution, — that is to say, a man of the most remarkable audacity, seconded by a most vigorous temperament; a man who perhaps has not, like yourself, seen all the kingdoms of the earth, but who has helped to overturn one of the most powerful; a man who, like you, believed himself one of the envoys, not of God, but of the Supreme Being, — not of Providence, but of fate. Well, Monsieur, the rupture of a blood-vessel in the lobe of the brain has destroyed all this, — not in a day, not in an hour, but in a second. M. Noirtier, who on the previous night was the old Jacobin, the old senator, the old Carbonaro, laughing at the guillotine, laughing at the cannon, laughing at the dagger; M. Noirtier, playing with revolutions; M. Noirtier, for whom France was a vast chess-board from which

pawns, rooks, knights, and queens were to disappear, so that the king was checkmated, — M. Noirtier, so redoubtable, was the next morning *poor M. Noirtier*, the helpless old man, at the tender mercies of the weakest creature in the household, that is, his grandchild, Valentine; a dumb and frozen carcass in fact, who only lives without suffering, that time may be given to his frame to decompose without his consciousness of its decay."

"Alas, sir!" said Monte Cristo, "this spectacle is neither strange to my eye nor my thought. I am something of a physician, and have, like my fellows, sought more than once for the soul in living and in dead matter; yet like Providence it has remained invisible to my eyes, although present to my heart. A hundred writers since Socrates, Seneca, Saint Augustine, and Gall have made in verse and prose the comparison you have made; and yet I can well understand that a father's sufferings may effect great changes in the mind of a son. I will call on you, sir, since you bid me contemplate, for the advantage of my pride, this terrible spectacle, which must spread so much sorrow throughout your house."

"It would have done so unquestionably, had not God given me so large a compensation. In presence of the old man who is dragging his way to the tomb, are two children just entering into life, — Valentine, the daughter by my first wife, Mademoiselle Renée de Saint-Méran, and Édouard, the boy whose life you have this day saved."

"And what is your deduction from this compensation, Monsieur?" inquired Monte Cristo.

"My deduction is," replied Villefort, "that my father, led away by his passions, has committed some fault unknown to human justice, but marked by the justice of God; and that God, wishing to punish but one person, has visited this justice on him alone."

Monte Cristo, with a smile on his lips, had yet a groan at his heart, which would have made Villefort fly had he but heard it.

"Adieu, Monsieur," said the magistrate, who had risen from his seat; "I leave you, bearing a remembrance of you, — a remembrance of esteem, which I hope will not be disagreeable to you when you know me better; for I am not a man to bore my friends, as you will learn. Besides, you have made an eternal friend of Madame de Villefort."

The count bowed and contented himself with seeing Villefort to the door of his cabinet, the *procureur* being escorted to his carriage by two footmen, who on a signal from their master followed him with every mark of attention. When he had gone, Monte Cristo drew a hard breath from his oppressed bosom, and said, "Enough of this poison; let me now seek the antidote." Then sounding his bell, he said to Ali, who entered, "I am going to Madame's apartments; have the carriage ready at one o'clock."

CHAPTER XII.

HAYDÉE.

THE reader will remember who were the new — or rather, old — acquaintances of the Count of Monte Cristo who lived in the Rue Meslay; they were Maximilian, Julie, and Emmanuel. The anticipation of that pleasant visit which he was about to make, of those few happy moments he was to enjoy, of that ray of Paradise gleaming across the hell to which he had voluntarily committed himself, had, from the moment in which he had lost sight of Villefort, illumined the face of the count with a most charming expression of happiness; and Ali, who had responded quickly to the call of the bell, seeing that face so beaming with a joy so rare, withdrew on tiptoe and holding his breath, as if he feared to frighten away the pleasing thoughts which seemed to him to hover around his master.

It was the hour of noon, and Monte Cristo had set apart one hour to be passed with Haydée. It seemed as if happiness could not gain a sudden admission to that soul which had been so long oppressed; that it needed to prepare itself for gentle emotions, as other souls need to be prepared for violent emotions. The young Greek, as we have already stated, occupied apartments wholly unconnected with those of the count. The rooms had been fitted up in strict accordance with the Eastern style, — that is to say, the floors were covered with the richest carpets Turkey could produce, and the walls hung with brocaded silk of the most magnificent designs and texture; while

around each chamber luxurious divans were placed, with piles of soft and yielding cushions that could be arranged at the pleasure of those who used them. Haydée had four women in her service, — three French and one Greek. The three French women remained constantly in a small waiting-room, ready to obey the first sound of a small golden bell, or to receive the orders of the Romaic slave, who knew sufficient French to transmit her mistress's orders to the three other waiting-women, who had received instructions from Monte Cristo to treat Haydée with all the respect and deference they would pay to a queen.

The young girl was in the inner room of her apartments, — a sort of boudoir, circular, lighted only from above, through panes of rose-colored glass. She was reclining upon cushions covered with blue satin spotted with silver; her head, supported by one of her exquisitely moulded arms, rested on the divan immediately behind her, while the other was employed in adjusting to her lips the coral tube of a rich nargile, through whose flexible pipe the vapor ascended fully impregnated with the rich odors of the most delicious flowers. Her attitude, though quite natural for an Oriental, would have evinced perhaps, in the case of a French woman, a slight affectation of coquetry. Her dress, which was that of the women of Epirus, consisted of a pair of white satin trousers, embroidered with pink roses, — exposing to view two small feet, which might have been taken for Parian marble but for their playing with two little sandals turned up at the point, and adorned with gold and pearls; a blue and white striped vest, with large open sleeves, trimmed with silver loops and buttons of pearls; and a species of bodice, which, of a heart-shaped pattern in front, exhibited the whole of the ivory throat and upper part of the bosom, and was fas-

tened below by three diamond buttons. The junction of the bodice and trousers was entirely concealed by one of those many-colored scarfs, whose brilliant hues and rich silken fringe have rendered them so precious in the eyes of Parisian belles. A small cap of gold, embroidered with pearls, was placed on one side of her head; while on the other a natural rose, of purple color, mingled with the luxuriant masses of her hair, which was so black that it appeared to be blue. The beauty of the countenance was peculiarly and purely Grecian; there were the large dark melting eyes, straight nose, the coral lips, and pearly teeth, that belonged to her race and country. And to complete the whole, Haydée was in the very springtide and fulness of youthful charms; she was nineteen or twenty years old.

Monte Cristo summoned the Greek attendant, and bade her inquire whether it would be agreeable to her mistress to receive his visit. Haydée's only reply was to direct her servant by a sign to withdraw the tapestried curtain that hung before the door of her boudoir; the framework of the opening thus made served as a sort of border to the graceful tableau presented by the reclining young girl. As Monte Cristo approached, she leaned upon the elbow of the arm that held the nargile, and extending to him her other hand, said with a smile of captivating sweetness, in the sonorous language spoken by the women of Athens and Sparta, "Why demand permission ere you enter? Are you no longer my master, or have I ceased to be your slave?"

Monte Cristo returned her smile. "Haydée," said he, "you know —"

"Why do you address me so coldly?" asked the fair Greek. "Have I by any means displeased you? If so, punish me as you will; but do not speak to me so formally!"

"Haydée," replied the count, "you know that we are now in France, and that you are consequently free!"

"Free!" repeated the young girl; "free to do what?"

"Free to leave me."

"Leave you! and why should I leave you?"

"That is not for me to say; but we are now about to mix in society, — to see the world."

"I have no wish to see any one."

"Nay, but hear me, Haydée. You cannot remain in seclusion in the midst of this gay capital; and should you see one whom you could prefer, think not I would be so selfish or unjust as to —"

"I have never seen men handsomer than you; and I have loved only you and my father."

"My poor child!" replied Monte Cristo, "that is merely because you have hardly spoken to any one but your father and myself."

"Well! what occasion is there for me to speak to any one else? My father called me *his joy;* you style me *your love;* and both of you call me *your child!*"

"Do you remember your father, Haydée?"

The young Greek smiled. "He is here, and here," said she, touching her eyes and her heart.

"And where am I then?" inquired Monte Cristo, laughingly.

"You?" cried she, "you are everywhere!"

Monte Cristo took the delicate hand of the young girl in his, and was about to raise it to his lips, when the simple child of Nature hastily withdrew it, and presented her fair cheek instead. "You now understand, Haydée," said the count, "that from this moment you are absolutely free; that you are mistress; that you are queen. You are at liberty to lay aside or continue the costume of your country, as it may suit your inclination; you will remain here when you

wish, and you will go abroad when you wish. There will always be a carriage awaiting your orders; and Ali and Myrto will accompany you whithersoever you desire to go. There is but one favor I would entreat of you."

"Oh, speak!"

"Preserve most carefully the secret of your birth. Make no allusion to the past; nor upon any occasion be induced to pronounce the name of your illustrious father nor that of your poor mother!"

"I have already told you, my Lord, that I will see no one."

"It is possible, Haydée, that so perfect a seclusion, though conformable with the habits and customs of the East, may not be practicable in Paris. Endeavor, then, to accustom yourself to our manner of living in these northern climes, as you did to those of Rome, Florence, Milan, and Madrid; it may be useful to you one of these days, whether you remain here or return to the East."

The young girl raised her tearful eyes towards Monte Cristo, as she said with touching earnestness, "Whether *we* return to the East, you mean, do you not, my Lord?"

"My child," returned Monte Cristo, "you know well that if we part, it will be by no wish of mine. The tree does not leave the flower; the flower leaves the tree."

"My Lord," replied Haydée, "I will never leave you, for I am sure that I could not live without you."

"Poor child! In ten years I shall be old; and you will still be young."

"My father had numbered sixty years, and the snows of age were on his head, but I admired and loved him far better than all the gay, handsome youths I saw about his court."

"Then tell me, Haydée, do you believe you shall be able to accustom yourself to our present mode of life?"

"Shall I see you?"

"Every day."

"Well, then! what are you asking me, my Lord?"

"I fear that you may feel lonely."

"No, my Lord, for in the morning I shall expect your coming, and in the evening shall remember that you have been with me; and besides, when alone I have grand remembrances, — I see again immense plains and far horizons with Pindus and Olympus in the distance; and then I have in my heart three sentiments which leave no room for *ennui*, — they are sorrow, love, and gratitude."

"You are a worthy daughter of Epirus, Haydée, and your charming and poetical ideas prove well your descent from that race of goddesses who claim your country as their birthplace; depend on my care to see that your youth is not blighted, or suffered to pass away in ungenial solitude, for if you love me as a father, I too love you as my child."

"Let not my Lord be deceived; the love I bear you resembles in no degree my feelings towards my father. I survived *his* death; but were any evil to befall you, the moment in which I learned the fatal tidings would be the last of my life."

The count, with a look of indescribable tenderness, extended his hand to the animated speaker, who carried it reverentially and affectionately to her lips. Monte Cristo, thus soothed and calmed into a befitting state of mind to pay his visit to the Morrels, departed, murmuring as he went these lines of Pindar, "Youth is a flower of which love is the fruit; happy is he who, after having watched its silent growth, is permitted to call it his own." The carriage was ready according to orders; and stepping lightly into it, the count drove off at his usual rapid pace.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MORREL FAMILY.

In a very few minutes the count reached No. 7 in the Rue Meslay. The house was of white stone, and in a small court before it were two small beds full of beautiful flowers. In the *concierge* that opened the gate the count recognized Coclès; but as he had but one eye, and that eye had considerably weakened in the course of nine years, Coclès did not recognize the count. The carriages that drove up to the door were compelled to turn to avoid a fountain that played in a basin of rockwork, in which sported a large number of gold and silver fishes, — an ornament that had excited the jealousy of the whole quarter, and had gained for the house the appellation of *le Petit Versailles*. The house, raised above the kitchens and cellars, had besides the ground-floor two stories and attics. The whole of the property, consisting of an immense workshop, two pavilions at the bottom of the garden, and the garden itself, had been purchased by Emmanuel, who had seen at a glance that he could make a profitable speculation of it. He had reserved the house and half the garden, and building a wall between the garden and the workshops, had let them with the pavilions at the bottom of the garden; so that for a trifling sum he was as well lodged, and as completely shut out from observation as the most exacting proprietor of a hotel in the Faubourg St. Germain. The dining-room was of oak; the salon, of mahogany and blue velvet; the bedroom, of citron wood

and room beneath. There was a study for Emmanuel, who never studied, and a music-room for Julie, who never played. The window of the second story was that of Maximilian; it was precisely the same as his sister's apartments, except that the dining-room was changed into a billiard-room, where he received his friends. He was superintending the pruning of his vines, and smoking his cigar at the entrance of the garden, when the count's carriage stopped at the door.

Coclès opened the gate, and Baptistin, springing from the box, inquired whether Monsieur and Madame Herbaut and M. Maximilian Morrel would see M. le Comte de Monte Cristo.

"M. le Comte de Monte Cristo!" cried Morrel, throwing away his cigar and hastening to the carriage: "I should think we would see him! Ah! a thousand thanks, Monsieur the Count, for not having forgotten your promise." And the young officer shook the count's hand so warmly that the latter could not be mistaken as to the sincerity of his expressions; he saw that he had been expected with impatience, and was received with pleasure.

"Come, come!" said Maximilian; "I will serve as your guide, — such a man as you are ought not to be introduced by a servant. My sister is in the garden plucking the dead roses; my brother is reading his two papers, 'La Presse' and 'Les Débats,' within five steps of her; for wherever you see Madame Herbaut you have only to look within a circle of four yards and you will find M. Emmanuel, and 'reciprocally,' as they say at the École Polytechnique." At the sound of their steps a young woman of from twenty to twenty-five years, dressed in a silk *robe de chambre*, and busily engaged in plucking the dead leaves off the splendid rose-tree, raised her head. This woman was Julie, who had become, as the clerk of the

house of Thomson and French had predicted, Madame Emmanuel Herbaut. She uttered a cry of surprise at the sight of a stranger; and Maximilian began to laugh. "Don't disturb yourself, Julie," said he. "Monsieur the Count has only been two or three days in Paris; but he already knows what a woman of fashion of the Marais is, and if he does not you will show him."

"Ah, Monsieur!" returned Julie, "it is treason in my brother to bring you thus; but he never has any regard for his poor sister. Penelon! Penelon!"

An old man, who was digging busily at one of the beds of roses, stuck his spade in the earth and approached, cap in hand, and striving to conceal a quid of tobacco he had just thrust into his cheek. A few locks of gray mingled with his hair, which was still thick and matted, while his bronzed features and determined glance announced the old sailor who had braved the heat of the equator and the storms of the tropics. "I think you hailed me, Mademoiselle Julie?" said he. Penelon had still preserved the habit of calling his master's daughter "Mademoiselle Julie," and had never been able to change the name to Madame Herbaut.

"Penelon," replied Julie, "go and inform M. Emmanuel of this gentleman's visit, while Maximilian conducts him to the salon." Then, turning to Monte Cristo, "I hope you will permit me to leave you for a few minutes," continued she, and without awaiting any reply disappeared behind a clump of trees, and entered the house by a lateral alley.

"I am sorry to see," observed Monte Cristo to Morrel, "that I cause no small disturbance in your house."

"Look there," said Maximilian, laughing; "there is her husband changing his jacket for a coat. I assure you that you are well known in the Rue Meslay."

"Your family appears to me a very happy one!" said the count, as if speaking to himself.

"Oh, yes, I assure you, Monsieur the Count, they want nothing that can render them happy. They are young and cheerful; they are tenderly attached to each other; and with twenty-five thousand livres a year they fancy themselves as rich as the Rothschilds."

"Five and twenty thousand livres is not a large sum, however," replied Monte Cristo, with a tone so sweet and gentle that it went to Maximilian's heart like the voice of a father; "but they will not be content with that. Your brother-in-law is a barrister; a doctor?"

"He was a merchant, Monsieur the Count, and had succeeded to the business of my poor father. M. Morrel, at his death, left five hundred thousand livres, which were divided between my sister and myself, for we were his only children. Her husband, who when he married her had no other patrimony than his noble probity, his first-rate ability, and his spotless reputation, wished to possess as much as his wife. He labored and toiled until he had amassed two hundred and fifty thousand livres; six years sufficed to achieve this object. Oh, I assure you, Monsieur the Count, it was a touching spectacle to see these young creatures, destined by their talents for higher stations, toiling together, and unwilling to change any of the customs of their paternal house, taking six years to accomplish that which innovators would have effected in two or three. Marseilles still resounds with their well-earned praises. At last, one day Emmanuel came to his wife, who had just finished making up the accounts. 'Julie,' said he to her, 'Coclès has just given me the last *rouleau* of a hundred livres; that completes the two hundred and fifty thousand livres we had fixed as the limits of our gains. Can you content yourself with the small fortune which we shall

possess for the future? Listen to me. Our house transacts business to the amount of a million a year, from which we derive an income of forty thousand livres. We can dispose of the business, if we please, in an hour, for I have received a letter from M. Delaunay, in which he offers to purchase the good-will of the house, to unite it with his own, for three hundred thousand livres. Advise me what I had better do.' 'Emmanuel,' returned my sister, 'the house of Morrel can only be carried on by a Morrel. Is it not worth three hundred thousand livres to save our father's name from the chances of evil fortune and failure?' 'I thought so,' replied Emmanuel; 'but I wished to have your advice.' 'This is my counsel: Our accounts are made up and our bills paid; all we have to do is to stop the issue of any more, and close our office.' This was done instantly. It was three o'clock; at a quarter past a merchant presented himself to insure two ships. There was a clear profit of fifteen thousand livres. 'Monsieur,' said Emmanuel, 'have the goodness to address yourself to M. Delaunay. We have quitted business.' 'How long ago?' inquired the astonished merchant. 'A quarter of an hour,' was the reply. And this is the reason, Monsieur," continued Maximilian, "that my sister and brother-in-law have only twenty-five thousand livres a year."

Maximilian had scarcely finished his story, during which the count's heart had seemed ready to burst, when Emmanuel entered, having meanwhile put on a hat and coat. He saluted the count with the air of a man who is aware of the rank of his guest, then after having led Monte Cristo round the little garden, he returned to the house. A large vase of Japan porcelain, filled with flowers that impregnated the air with their perfume, stood in the salon. Julie, suitably dressed, and with her hair coquettishly arranged (she had accomplished

this feat in less than ten minutes), received the count on his entrance. The songs of the birds were heard in an aviary hard by, — the branches of false ebony trees and rose acacias forming the border of the blue velvet curtains. Everything in this charming retreat, from the warble of the birds to the smile of the mistress, breathed tranquillity and repose. The count had felt from the moment he entered the house the influence of this happiness, and he remained silent and pensive, forgetting that he was expected to recommence the conversation which had ceased after the first salutations had been exchanged. He perceived the pause, and by a violent effort tearing himself from his revery, "Madame," said he at length, "I pray you to excuse my emotion, which must astonish you who are accustomed to the happiness I meet here; but satisfaction upon a human countenance is so new a sight to me, that I could never be weary of looking at yourself and your husband."

"We are indeed very happy, Monsieur," replied Julie; "but we have also known unhappiness, and few have ever undergone more bitter sufferings than ourselves."

The count's features now displayed an expression of curiosity.

"Oh, all this is a family history, as Château-Renaud told you the other day," observed Maximilian. "This humble picture would have but little interest for you, accustomed as you are to behold the pleasures and the misfortunes of the wealthy and illustrious; but such as we are we have experienced bitter sorrows."

"And God has poured balm into your wounds, as he does for all those who are in affliction?" said Monte Cristo, inquiringly.

"Yes, Monsieur the Count," returned Julie, "we may indeed say he has, for he has done for us what

he does for only his elect, — he sent us one of his angels."

The count's cheeks became scarlet, and he coughed so as to have an excuse for putting his handkerchief to his mouth.

"Those born to wealth and who have the means of gratifying every wish," said Emmanuel, "know not what is the real happiness of life; just as those who have been tossed on the stormy waters of the ocean on a few frail planks can alone estimate the value of a clear and serene sky."

Monte Cristo rose, and without making any answer, — for the tremulousness of his voice would have betrayed his emotion, — walked up and down the room with a slow step.

"Our magnificence makes you smile, Monsieur the Count," said Maximilian, who had followed him with his eyes.

"No, no," returned Monte Cristo, very pale, and pressing one hand on his heart to still its throbbings, while with the other he pointed to a crystal cover, beneath which a silken purse lay on a black velvet cushion. "I was wondering what could be the use of this purse which appears to contain a paper at one end, and at the other a large diamond."

"Monsieur the Count," replied Maximilian, with an air of gravity, "those are our most precious family treasures."

"The stone seems very brilliant," answered the count.

"Oh, my brother does not allude to its value, although it has been estimated at one hundred thousand livres; he means that the articles contained in this purse are memorials of the angel of whom I spoke just now."

"This I do not comprehend; and yet I may not ask for an explanation, Madame," replied Monte Cristo, bowing. "Pardon me, I had no intention of committing an indiscretion."

"Indiscretion! Oh, you make us happy by giving us

an occasion of expatiating on this subject. Did we intend to conceal the noble action this purse commemorates, we should not expose it thus. Oh! would we could relate it everywhere and to every one! so that the emotion of our unknown benefactor might reveal his presence."

"Ah, really!" said Monto Cristo, in a half-stifled voice.

"Monsieur," returned Maximilian, raising the glass cover and respectfully kissing the silken purse, "this has touched the hand of a man who saved my father from suicide, us from ruin, and our name from shame and disgrace, — a man by whose matchless benevolence we, poor children doomed to want and wretchedness, can at present hear every one envying our happy lot. This letter" (as he spoke, Maximilian drew a letter from the purse and gave it to the count) — "this letter was written by him the day that my father had taken a desperate resolution, and this diamond was given by the generous unknown to my sister as her dowry." Monte Cristo opened the letter and read it with an indescribable feeling of delight. It was the letter written (as our readers know) to Julie, and signed "Sinbad the Sailor."

"Unknown, you say; is the man who rendered you this service unknown to you?"

"Yes; we have never had the happiness of pressing his hand," continued Maximilian. "We have supplicated Heaven in vain to grant us this favor, but all the affair has had a mysterious direction which we cannot comprehend; all has been guided by a hand invisible but powerful as that of an enchanter."

"Oh!" cried Julie, "I have not lost all hope of some day kissing that hand as I now kiss the purse which he has touched. Four years ago Penelon was at Trieste, — Penelon, Monsieur the Count, is the old sailor whom you saw in the garden, and who from quartermaster has be-

come gardener, — Penelon, when he was at Trieste, saw on the quay an Englishman who was on the point of embarking on board a yacht; and he recognized him as the person who called on my father on the 5th of June, 1829, and who wrote me this letter on the 5th of September. He felt convinced of his identity, but he did not venture to address him."

"An Englishman!" said Monte Cristo, who grew uneasy at the attention with which Julie looked at him. "An Englishman, you say?"

"Yes," replied Maximilian, "an Englishman, who represented himself as the confidential clerk of the house of Thomson and French, at Rome. It was this that made me start when you said the other day, at M. de Morcerf's, that Messrs. Thomson and French were your bankers. That happened, as I told you, in 1829. For God's sake, tell me, did you know this Englishman?"

"But you tell me, also, that the house of Thomson and French have constantly denied having rendered you this service?"

"Yes."

"Then is it not probable that this Englishman may be some one who, grateful for a kindness your father had shown him, and which he himself had forgotten, has taken this method of requiting the obligation?"

"Everything is possible on such an occasion, even a miracle."

"What was his name?" asked Monte Cristo.

"He gave no other name," answered Julie, looking earnestly at the count, "than that at the end of his letter, — 'Sinbad the Sailor.'"

"Which is evidently not his real name, but a fictitious one."

Then noticing that Julie was struck with the sound or

his voice, "Tell me," continued he, "was he not about my height, perhaps a little taller and slenderer, with his neck confined in a high cravat, — closely buttoned and laced, and always carrying a pencil in his hand?"

"Oh, do you then know him?" cried Julie, whose eyes sparkled with joy.

"No," returned Monte Cristo, "I only guessed. I knew a Lord Wilmore, who was constantly doing acts of generosity."

"Without revealing himself?"

"He was an eccentric being, and did not believe in the existence of gratitude."

"Oh, Heaven!" exclaimed Julie, clasping her hands. "In what did he believe, then?"

"He did not believe in it at the period when I knew him," said Monte Cristo, touched to the heart by the accents of Julie's voice; "but perhaps since then he has had proofs that gratitude does exist."

"And do you know this gentleman, Monsieur?" inquired Emmanuel.

"Oh, if you do know him," cried Julie, "can you tell us where he is, — where we can find him? Maximilian, Emmanuel! if we do but discover him, he must believe in the gratitude of the heart!"

Monte Cristo felt tears start into his eyes, and he again walked hastily up and down the room.

"In the name of Heaven!" said Maximilian, "if you know anything of him, tell us what it is."

"Alas!" cried Monte Cristo, striving to repress his emotion. "If Lord Wilmore was your unknown benefactor, I fear you will never again see him. I parted from him two years ago at Palermo, and he was then on the point of setting out for the most remote regions; so that I fear he will never return."

"Oh, Monsieur, this is cruel of you," said Julie, much affected; and tears came into her eyes.

"Madame," replied Monte Cristo, gravely, and gazing earnestly on the two liquid pearls that trickled down Julie's cheeks, "had Lord Wilmore seen what I now see, he would become attached to life, for the tears you shed would reconcile him to mankind;" and he held out his hand to Julie, who gave him hers, carried away by the look and accent of the count.

"But this Lord Wilmore," said she, clinging to the last hope, "had a country, a family, relatives, — in short, he was known to some one? Could we not, then —"

"Oh, make no inquiries, Madame," said the count; "do not build chimerical hopes on that word of mine. No; Lord Wilmore is probably not the man whom you seek. He was my friend; he had no secrets from me, and he would have confided this also to me."

"And he told you nothing?"

"Nothing."

"Never a word which might lead you to suppose —"

"Never."

"And yet you instantly named him."

"Ah, in such a case one supposes —"

"Sister, Sister," said Maximilian, coming to the count's aid, "Monsieur is quite right. Recollect what our excellent father so often told us: 'It was no Englishman that thus saved us.'"

Monte Cristo started. "What did your father tell you, M. Morrel?" said he, eagerly.

"My father thought that this action had been miraculously performed; he believed that a benefactor had arisen from the grave to save us. Oh, it was a touching superstition, Monsieur; and although I did not myself believe it, I would not for the world have destroyed my father's

faith in it. How often did he muse over it and pronounce the name of a dear friend, — a friend lost to him forever; and on his death-bed, when the near approach of eternity seemed to have illumined his mind with supernatural light, this thought, which had until then been but a doubt, became a conviction, and his last words were, 'Maximilian, it was Edmond Dantès!'"

At these words the count's paleness, which had for some time been increasing, became alarming. He could not speak; he looked at his watch like a man who has forgotten the time, said a few hurried words to Madame Herbaut, and pressing the hands of Emmanuel and Maximilian, "Madame," said he, "I trust you will allow me to visit you from time to time; I value your friendship and feel grateful to you for your welcome, for this is the first time for many years that I have thus yielded to my feelings;" and he hastily quitted the room.

"This Count of Monte Cristo is a singular man," said Emmanuel.

"Yes," answered Maximilian, "but I feel sure he has an excellent heart, and that he likes us."

"His voice went to my heart," observed Julie; "and two or three times I fancied I had heard it before."

CHAPTER XIV.

PYRAMUS AND THISBE.

NEAR the middle of the Faubourg St. Honoré, and at the back of one of the most distinguished-looking mansions in this rich neighborhood, where the various hotels vie with each other for elegance of design and magnificence of construction, extended a large garden, whose widely-spreading chestnut-trees raised their heads above the walls, high and solid as those of a rampart, scattering each spring a shower of delicate pink and white blossoms into the large stone vases placed at equal distances upon the two square pilasters supporting an iron gate of the time of Louis XIV. This noble entrance, however, notwithstanding its striking appearance and the graceful effect of the geraniums planted in the two vases, as they waved their variegated leaves in the wind, and charmed the eye with their scarlet bloom, had fallen into utter disuse from the period when the proprietors of the hotel (and many years had elapsed since then) had confined themselves to the possession of the hotel, with its thickly-planted courtyard opening into the Faubourg St. Honoré, and the garden shut in by this gate, which formerly communicated with a fine kitchen-garden of about an acre in extent. But the demon of speculation having drawn a line, — that is to say, a street, — at the extremity of this garden, and the street having received a name even before it was completed, it occurred to the owner to sell the garden for a building

site on the street, and make connection with that grand artery of Paris called the Faubourg St. Honoré.

In matters of speculation, however, man proposes, and money disposes. The newly named street was never finished; and the purchaser of the kitchen-garden, having made complete payment, was unable to find any one willing to take his bargain off his hands without a considerable loss. Believing, however, that at some future day he should obtain a sum for it that would repay him not only for his past outlay, but also the interest upon the capital locked up in his new acquisition, he contented himself with letting the ground temporarily to some market-gardeners, at a yearly rent of five hundred livres. Thus, then, as already stated, the iron gate leading into the kitchen-garden had been closed up and left to the rust, which bade fair to destroy its hinges ere long, while to prevent the ignoble glances of the diggers and delvers of the ground from presuming to sully the aristocratic enclosure belonging to the hotel, the gate in question had been boarded up to a height of six feet. True, the planks are not so closely adjusted but that stolen views may be obtained between their interstices; but that house is rigidly proper, and has no fear of indiscreet curiosity.

In that garden, where the most choice and delicate of fruits and vegetables once reared their heads, a scanty crop of lucerne alone bears evidence of cultivation. A small, low door opening on the projected street gives entrance to the enclosed space, which has finally been abandoned on account of its sterility, and which for a week past instead of yielding one half of one per cent on its cost, as it had previously, yields nothing at all. Towards the hotel the chestnut-trees we have before mentioned rise high above the wall, without in any way affecting the growth of other ariant shrubs and flowers that eagerly press forward to

fill up the vacant spaces, as though asserting their right to enjoy the boon of light and air also. At one corner, where the foliage is so thick as almost to shut out the daylight, a large stone bench and sundry rustic seats indicate that this sheltered spot is either a place of assemblage or a favorite retreat of some inhabitant of the hotel, which is faintly discernible through the dense mass of verdure that partially conceals it, though situated but a hundred paces off. In short, the choice of this mysterious retreat is abundantly justified by the absence of all glare; the cool, refreshing shade; the screen it affords from the scorching rays of the sun, that find no entrance there even during the burning days of hottest summer; the warbling of birds; and the seclusion from both the noise of the street and the bustle of the hotel.

On the evening of one of the warmest days spring had yet bestowed on the inhabitants of Paris, might be seen, negligently thrown upon the stone bench, a book, a parasol, and a work-basket from which hung a partly embroidered cambric handkerchief; while at a little distance from these articles was a young woman, standing close to the iron gate, endeavoring to discern something on the other side through the openings in the planks, while the earnestness of her attitude and the fixed gaze with which she seemed to seek the object of her wishes, proved how much her feelings were interested in the matter. At that instant, the little side door leading from the enclosure to the street was noiselessly opened; and a tall powerful young man, dressed in a common gray blouse and velvet cap, but whose carefully arranged hair, beard, and mustaches, all of the richest and glossiest black, but ill accorded with his plebeian attire, after casting a rapid glance around him, in order to assure himself that he was unobserved, entered, and carefully closing and securing it after

him, proceeded with a hurried step towards the iron gate.

On seeing him present whom she had been expecting to see, though probably not in such a costume, the young girl started in terror, and was about to make a hasty retreat. But the young man with the eye of love had already seen through the openings in the gate the movement of the white robe, and observed the fluttering of the blue sash fastened around the slender waist of his fair neighbor. He sprang to the wall, and applying his mouth to an opening, exclaimed, "Fear nothing, Valentine; it is I!"

The young girl drew near. "Oh, Monsieur," she said, "why have you come to-day so late? It is almost the dinner-hour, and I have been compelled to exercise my utmost skill to get rid of the incessant watchfulness of my stepmother, as well as the espionage of my maid, who no doubt is employed to report all I do and say. Nor has it cost me a little trouble to free myself from the troublesome society of my brother, under pretence of coming hither to work undisturbed at my embroidery, which I fear will not soon be finished. So excuse yourself as well as you can for having made me wait; and after that tell me why I see you in so singular a dress, which almost prevented my recognizing you."

"Dear Valentine," said the young man, "you are so far beyond my love that I dare not speak of it to you; and yet every time I see you I want to tell you that I adore you, so that the echo of my own words is sweet in my heart when I am no longer with you. Now I thank you for your reproaches; they are altogether charming, for they show me, I don't dare to say that you awaited me, but that you thought of me. You wish to know the cause of my delay and the reason of my disguise; I will explain, and I hope that you will pardon. I have chosen a trade "

"A trade! Oh, Maximilian, how can you jest at a time when we have such deep cause for uneasiness?"

"Heaven keep me from jesting with that which is far dearer to me than life itself! But listen to me, Valentine, and I will tell you all about it. Tired out with ranging fields and scaling walls, and seriously alarmed at the idea suggested by yourself, that if I should be caught hovering about here your father would very likely have me sent to prison as a thief, — which would taint the honor of the entire French army, — and dreading no less the surprise that might be occasioned by the sight of a captain of Spahis hovering eternally about this spot where there is neither a citadel to besiege nor a stockade to defend, — I have become a gardener, and have adopted the costume of my calling."

"What nonsense you talk, Maximilian!"

"On the contrary, it is, I believe, the wisest action of my life, for it affords us every security."

"I beseech of you, Maximilian, to tell me what you mean."

"Simply, that having ascertained that the piece of ground on which I stand was to let, I made application for it, was readily accepted by the proprietor, and am now master of this fine crop of lucerne! Think of that, Valentine! There is nothing now to prevent my building myself a little hut on my plantation, and residing not twenty yards from you. Imagine my happiness! I can scarcely contain myself. Do you understand, Valentine, that such things can be paid for? Impossible, is it not? Well, all that happiness, all that comfort, all that joy, for which I would have given ten years of my life, cost me — guess how much? — five hundred livres per year, payable quarterly! Henceforth we have nothing to fear. I am on *my own ground*, and have an undoubted right to place a

ladder against the wall, and to look over when I please; and I may tell you that I love you, without fear of being taken off by the police, — unless, indeed, it offends your pride to listen to professions of love from the lips of a poor working-man, clad in a blouse and cap."

A faint cry of mingled pleasure and surprise escaped from the lips of Valentine, who almost instantly said in a saddened tone, as though some envious cloud darkened the joy which illumined her heart, "Alas, no, Maximilian! this must not be, for many reasons! We should presume too much on our own strength, and like others perhaps be led astray by our blind confidence in each other's prudence."

"How can you for an instant entertain so unworthy a thought, dear Valentine? Have I not, from the first blessed hour of our acquaintance, schooled all my words and actions to your sentiments and ideas? And you have, I am sure, the fullest confidence in my honor. When you spoke to me of your experiencing a vague and indefinite sense of coming danger, I placed myself devotedly at your service, asking no other reward than the pleasure of being useful to you; and have I ever since by word or look given you cause of regret for having selected me from among those who would willingly have sacrificed their lives for you? You told me, my dear Valentine, that you were engaged to M. d'Épinay; and that your father was resolved upon completing the match; and that from his will there was no appeal, as M. de Villefort was never known to change a determination once formed. Well, I kept myself in the background, awaiting, not my own resolution nor yours, but the ordering of Providence. And meanwhile you love me; you have had pity on me and avowed it. I thank you for that sweet word; I ask only that you will repeat it from time to time, — it will enable me to *forget everything* else."

"Ah, Maximilian, that is the very thing that makes you so bold, and which renders me at once so happy and unhappy that I frequently ask myself which is to be preferred, — the unhappiness occasioned by the harshness of my stepmother, and her blind preference for her own child, or the happiness full of danger which I enjoy in seeing you."

"Danger!" cried Maximilian; "can you use a word so hard and so unjust? Is it possible to find a more submissive slave than myself? You have permitted me to converse with you from time to time, Valentine, but forbidden my ever following you in your walks or elsewhere; I have obeyed. And since I found means to enter this enclosure, to talk with you through this door, to be close to you without seeing you, have I ever sought to touch even the hem of your robe through these openings? Have I ever attempted to throw down this wall, — an obstacle so trivial to my youth and my strength? I have never complained of your reserve, never expressed a desire. I have held to my promise like a knight of the olden time. Come, admit so much at least, that I may not think you unjust."

"It is true," said Valentine, passing through a small opening in the planks the end of one of her delicate fingers, to which Maximilian pressed his lips, — "it is true. You are an honorable friend; but still you acted from motives of self-interest, my dear Maximilian, for you well knew that from the moment in which you had manifested an opposite spirit all would have been ended between us. You promised to bestow on me the friendly affection of a brother, — on me, who have no friend but yourself upon earth, who am neglected and forgotten by my father, harassed and persecuted by my stepmother, and left to the sole companionship of a paralyzed and speechless old man, whose

withered hand can no longer press mine, whose eye alone converses with me, and whose heart doubtless retains for me some lingering warmth. Oh, how bitter a fate is mine, to serve either as a victim or an enemy to all who are stronger than myself, while my only friend and supporter is but a living corpse! Indeed, Maximilian, I am very miserable, and you are right to love me for my sake and not your own."

"Valentine," replied the young man, deeply affected, "I will not say you are all I love in the world, for I dearly prize my sister and brother-in-law; but my affection for them is calm and tranquil, in no manner resembling that I feel for you. At the mere thought of you my heart beats more quickly, my blood flows with increased rapidity through my veins, and my breast heaves with tumultuous emotions; but I solemnly promise you to restrain all this ardor, this fervor and intensity of feeling, until you yourself shall require me to render them available in serving or assisting you. M. Franz is not expected to return home for a year to come, I am told; in that time many favorable and unforeseen chances may befriend us. Let us, then, hope for the best, — hope is so sweet a comforter. Meanwhile, Valentine, while reproaching me with selfishness, think a little of what you have been to me, — the beautiful and cold statue of a modest Venus. In return for that devotion, that obedience, that restraint, what have you promised me, — you? Nothing. What have you granted me? Very little. You tell me of M. Franz d'Épinay, your betrothed lover; and you shrink from the idea of being his wife. Tell me, Valentine, is there nothing else in your heart? What! I pledge my life to you, I give you my soul, I devote to you even the lightest pulsation of my heart. And when I am thus wholly yours; when I say to myself that I shall die if I lose you, — you, you do not

shudder with fright at the bare thought of belonging to another! Oh, Valentine, Valentine! if I were in your place, if I knew myself loved as you are sure that I love you, a hundred times at least should I have passed my hand between these iron bars, and said to poor Maximilian, 'Yours, yours only, Maximilian, in this world and the next!'"

Valentine made no reply; but her lover could plainly hear her sobs and tears. A rapid change took place in the young man's feelings. "Oh, Valentine, Valentine!" he exclaimed, "forget my words if there is anything in them to give you pain."

"No," she said, "you are right; but do you not see that I am a poor creature, at home abandoned almost as a stranger, — for my father is almost a stranger to me, — whose will, since I was ten years old, has been broken day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute, by the iron will of those by whom I am oppressed? No one knows what I suffer, and I have not spoken of it except to you. Outwardly, and in the eyes of the world, all goes well with me, — every one is kind to me; but in fact every one is my enemy. The general remark is, 'Oh, it cannot be expected that one of so stern a character as M. de Villefort could lavish the tenderness some fathers do on their daughters, but she has had the happiness to find a second mother in Madame de Villefort.' The world, however, is mistaken; my father abandons me from utter indifference, while my stepmother detests me with a hatred the more terrible as it is veiled beneath a continual smile."

"Hate you! you, Valentine!" exclaimed the young man; "how is it possible for any one to do that?"

"Alas!" said Valentine, "I am obliged to own that my stepmother's aversion to me arises from a very natural source, — her overweening love for her own child, my brother Édouard."

"How is that?"

"How is it? It seems strange to me to speak of money matters in a conversation with you; but, my friend, I think her hatred towards me springs from that source. She has no fortune; while I am already rich, as heiress to my mother, and my possessions will be doubled by the wealth of Monsieur and Madame de Saint-Méran, which will some day fall to me. Well, I think that she is envious. Oh, my God! if I could only give to her the half of that fortune and find myself in the home of M. de Villefort as a daughter in the house of her father, I would certainly do it without hesitation."

"Poor Valentine!"

"I seem to myself as though living a life of bondage, yet at the same time am so conscious of weakness that I fear to break the restraint in which I am held, lest I fall utterly powerless and helpless. Then, too, my father is not a person whose orders may be infringed with impunity. He is powerful against me; he would be powerful against you, even against the king, — protected as he is by an irreproachable past and by a position almost impregnable. Oh, Maximilian! I assure you if I do not struggle, it is because you also, as well as I, would be overwhelmed in that struggle."

"But why, Valentine, do you despair, and regard the future with dread?"

"Ah, my friend! because I judge it from the past."

"Still, consider that although I may not be, strictly speaking, what is termed an illustrious match for you, I am for many reasons not altogether so much beneath your alliance. The days when such distinctions were so nicely weighed and considered no longer exist in France; and the first families of the monarchy have intermarried with those of the empire. The aristocracy of the lance has

allied itself with the nobility of the cannon. Well, I belong to the latter class; I have a promising future in the army; I possess a fortune limited but independent; and my father's memory is revered in our country as that of a most honorable merchant. I say our country, Valentine, because you were born not far from Marseilles."

"Name not Marseilles, I beseech you, Maximilian; that one word brings back my mother to my recollection, — my angel mother, who died too soon for myself and for all who knew her, but who, after watching over her child during a brief period in this world, now, I hope at least, contemplates her with pitying tenderness from those realms of bliss to which her pure spirit has flown. Ah, were she still living, we need fear nothing, Maximilian, for I would confide our love to her, and she would aid and protect us."

"I fear, Valentine," replied the lover, "that were she living I should never have had the happiness of knowing you. You would then have been too happy; and Valentine happy would have regarded me disdainfully from the height of her grandeur."

"It is you who are unkind, — ay, and unjust, too, now, Maximilian," cried Valentine; "but there is one thing I wish to know."

"And what is that," inquired the young man, perceiving that Valentine hesitated and seemed at a loss how to proceed.

"Tell me, Maximilian, whether in former days, at Marseilles, there ever existed any misunderstanding between your father and mine?"

"Not that I am aware of," replied the young man; "unless, indeed, some ill-feeling might have arisen from their being of rather being, as you

know, a zealous partisan of the Bourbons, while mine was wholly devoted to the emperor. There could not have been any other difference between them. But why that question, Valentine?"

"I will tell you," replied the young girl, "for it is but right that you should know all. Then I must begin by referring to the day when your being made an officer of the Legion of Honor was publicly announced in the papers. We were all sitting in the apartment of my grandfather, M. Noirtier. M. Danglars was there also; you recollect M. Danglars, do you not, Maximilian? — the banker, whose horses ran away with my stepmother and little brother, and very nearly killed them. While the rest of the company were discussing the approaching marriage of Mademoiselle Danglars, I was occupied in reading the paper aloud to my grandfather; but when I came to the paragraph concerning you, although I had done nothing else but read it over to myself all the morning (you know you had told me all about it the previous evening), I felt so happy, and yet so nervous, at the idea of pronouncing your beloved name aloud and before so many people, that I really think I should have passed it over but for the fear that my so doing might create suspicions as to the cause of my silence. So I summoned up all my courage, and read it as firmly and steadily as I could."

"Dear Valentine!"

"Well, as soon as my father caught the sound of your name he turned round quite hastily. I was so certain — you see how foolish I am — that every one had been struck by your name as by a thunderbolt that I thought I saw my father give a start, and even M. Danglars, too, — though that of course was an illusion.

"'Morrel! Morrel!' cried my father, 'stop a bit;' then, *putting his brows into* a deep frown, he added, 'Can that

be one of the Morrels of Marseilles, — those furious Bonapartists who gave us so much trouble in 1815?'

"'I fancy,' replied M. Danglars, 'that the individual alluded to in the journal Mademoiselle is reading is the son of that former ship-owner.'"

"Indeed!" answered Maximilian; "and what said your father then, Valentine?"

"Oh, such a dreadful thing I dare not repeat it."

"Tell it, nevertheless," said the young man, smiling.

"'Ah,' continued my father, still frowning, 'their idolized emperor treated these madmen as they deserved; he called them "food for cannon," which was precisely all they were good for. And I am delighted to see that the present Government is vigorously applying this salutary principle. Though it should keep Algiers only for that purpose, I would congratulate the Government, even though that policy be costly.'"

"The sentiments expressed were somewhat unfeeling," said Maximilian; "but do not blush, dear friend, at that speech of M. de Villefort, for I can assure you that my father was not behind yours in the heat of his political expressions. 'Why,' said he, 'does not the emperor, who does so many fine things, form a regiment of judges and lawyers and send them always to the front of battle?' You see, Valentine, that for mildness of thought and picturesqueness of expression there is not much choice between the two parties. But what said M. Danglars to this burst of party spirit on the part of the *procureur du roi?*"

"Oh, he laughed, and in that sinister way peculiar to him and which to me seems ferocious; and a moment later they got up and went out. Then for the first time I observed the agitation of my grandfather; and I must tell you *Maximilian, that* I am the only person capable of discerning

emotion in that poor paralytic. I suspected that the conversation that had been carried on in his presence (for no one pays attention to him, poor man) had made a strong impression on his mind, — for naturally enough it must have pained him to hear the emperor he so devotedly loved and served spoken of in that depreciating manner."

"The name of M. Noirtier," said Maximilian, "is one of the celebrated names of the empire. He was a statesman of high standing; and I know not whether you are aware, Valentine, that he took a leading part in every Bonapartist conspiracy set on foot during the restoration of the Bourbons."

"Oh, I have often heard whispers of things that seem to me most strange, — the father a Bonapartist, the son a Royalist; what can have been the reason of so singular a difference in parties and politics? But to resume my story: I turned towards my grandfather, as though to question him as to the cause of his emotion; he looked expressively at the newspaper I had been reading. 'What is the matter, dear grandfather?' said I. 'Are you pleased?' He gave me a sign in the affirmative. 'With what my father said just now?' He returned a sign in the negative. 'Perhaps you liked what M. Danglars remarked?' Another sign in the negative. 'Oh, then, you were glad to hear that M. Morrel' (I dared not say Maximilian) 'has been made an officer of the Legion of Honor?' He signified assent. Only think of the poor old man's being pleased that you, a stranger to him, had been made an officer of the Legion of Honor! Perhaps, though, it was foolishness on his part, for he is falling, they say, into a second childhood! but I love him better for that sign of assent."

"How singular," murmured Maximilian, "that your father *should apparently* hate the very mention of my

name, while your grandfather, on the contrary — Strange things are these partisan loves and hatreds!"

"Hush!" cried Valentine, suddenly, "conceal yourself! Go, go! Some one comes!"

Maximilian leaped at one bound into his crop of lucerne, which he commenced pulling up in the most pitiless manner, under the pretext of being occupied in weeding it.

"Mademoiselle! Mademoiselle!" exclaimed a voice from behind the trees. "Madame is searching for you everywhere; there are visitors in the drawing-room."

"Visitors!" inquired Valentine, much agitated, "who are they?"

"A great lord, a prince, as they tell me, — M. le Comte de Monte Cristo."

"I will come directly," said Valentine, aloud.

The name caused an electric shock to the individual on the other side of the iron gate, on whose ear the "I will come!" of Valentine sounded the parting knell of all their interviews.

"Now, then," said Maximilian, leaning thoughtfully on his spade, "how does it happen that the Count of Monte Cristo is acquainted with M. de Villefort?"

CHAPTER XV.

TOXICOLOGY.

It was really the Count of Monte Cristo who had just arrived at Madame de Villefort's for the purpose of returning the visit of the *procureur du roi;* and at this name, as may be easily imagined, the whole house was in confusion. Madame de Villefort, who was alone in her drawing-room when the count was announced, desired that her son might be brought thither instantly to renew his thanks to the count; and Édouard, who had heard this great personage spoken of unceasingly the last two days made all possible haste to come to him, — not in obedience to his mother, nor from any feeling of gratitude to the count, but from sheer curiosity, and that he might make some remark by help of which he might find an opportunity for saying one of those small pertnesses which made his mother say, "Oh, that sad child! but pray excuse him, he is really *so* clever."

After the first customary civilities, the count inquired after M. de Villefort.

"My husband dines with the chancellor," replied the young wife. "He has just gone; and I am sure he will much regret having lost the pleasure of seeing you."

Two visitors who were there when the count arrived, having gazed at him with all their eyes, retired after that [illegible] delay required both by politeness and curiosity.

"[illegible] what is your sister Valentine doing?" inquired [illegible] *Villefort* of Édouard; "tell some one to bid

her come here, that I may have the honor of presenting her to the count."

"You have a daughter, then, Madame?" inquired the count; "very young, I presume?"

"The daughter of M. de Villefort," replied the young wife, "by his first marriage, — a fine well-grown girl."

"But melancholy," interrupted Master Édouard, snatching the feathers out of the tail of a splendid paroquet that was screaming on its gilded perch, in order to make a plume for his hat. Madame de Villefort merely cried, "Silence, Édouard!" She then added, "This young madcap is, however, very nearly right, and merely re-echoes what he has heard me say with pain a hundred times; for Mademoiselle de Villefort is, in spite of all we can do to rouse her, of a melancholy disposition and taciturn habit which frequently injure the effect of her beauty. But she does not come, Édouard; go and ascertain the reason."

"Because they are looking for her where she is not to be found."

"And where are they looking for her?"

"With Grandpapa Noirtier."

"And do you think she is not there?"

"No, no, no, no, no, she is not there!" replied Édouard, singing his words.

"And where is she, then? If you know, why don't you tell?"

"She is under the great chestnut-tree," replied the spoiled child, as he gave, in spite of his mother's cries, live flies to the parrot, who appeared to relish that sort of game. Madame de Villefort stretched out her hand to ring, intending to direct her waiting-maid to the spot where she would find Valentine, when the young lady herself entered the room. She appeared much dejected;

and any person who considered her attentively might have observed the traces of tears in her eyes.

Valentine, whom we have in the rapid march of our narrative presented to our readers without formally introducing her, was a tall and graceful girl of nineteen years of age, with bright chestnut hair, deep blue eyes, and that languishing air so full of distinction which characterized her mother. Her white and slender fingers, her pearly neck, her cheeks tinted with varying hues, gave her at the first view the aspect of one of those lovely Englishwomen who have been so poetically compared in their manner to a swan admiring itself. She entered the room, and seeing near her stepmother the stranger of whom she had already heard so much, saluted him without any girlish awkwardness, or even lowering her eyes, and with a grace that redoubled the count's attention. He rose to return the salutation.

"Mademoiselle de Villefort, my stepdaughter," said Madame de Villefort to Monte Cristo, leaning back on her sofa and motioning towards Valentine with her hand.

"And M. le Comte de Monte Cristo, King of China, Emperor of Cochin-China," said the young imp, looking slyly towards his sister.

Madame de Villefort at this really did turn pale, and was very nearly angry with this household plague who answered to the name of Édouard; but the count on the contrary smiled, and appeared to look at the boy complacently, which caused the maternal heart to bound again with joy and enthusiasm.

"But, Madame," replied the count, continuing the conversation, and looking by turns at Madame de Villefort and Valentine, "have I not already had the honor of meeting you and Mademoiselle? The idea occurred to me a moment since, and as Mademoiselle entered

the sight of her was an additional ray of light thrown on a confused remembrance; excuse me the word."

"I do not think it likely, Monsieur; Mademoiselle de Villefort is not very fond of society, and we very seldom go out," said the young wife.

"Then it was not in society that I met with Mademoiselle and yourself, Madame, and this charming little fellow. Besides, the Parisian world is entirely unknown to me, for, as I believe I told you, I have been in Paris but very few days. No; but perhaps you will permit me to call to mind — stay!" The count placed his hand on his brow as if to collect his thoughts. "No — it was somewhere — away from here — it was — I do not know — but it appears that this recollection is connected with a lovely sky and some religious fête. Mademoiselle was holding flowers in her hand; the child was chasing a beautiful peacock in a garden; and you, Madame, were under the trellis of some arbor. Pray come to my aid, Madame; do not these circumstances bring to your mind some reminiscences?"

"No, indeed," replied Madame de Villefort; "and yet it appears to me, Monsieur, that if I had met you anywhere the recollection of you must have been imprinted on my memory."

"Perhaps Monsieur the Count saw us in Italy," said Valentine, timidly.

"Yes, in Italy, — it was in Italy most probably," replied Monte Cristo; "you have travelled then in Italy, Mademoiselle?"

"Yes; Madame and I were there two years ago. The doctors were afraid for my lungs, and prescribed the air of Naples. We went by Bologna, Perusa, and Rome."

"Ah, yes; true, Mademoiselle," exclaimed Monte Cristo, as if this simple indication was sufficient to deter

mine his recollection. "It was at Perusa on the day of the Fête-Dieu, in the garden of the Hôtel des Postes, that chance brought us together, — you, Madame de Villefort, your son, Mademoiselle, and myself; I now remember having had the honor of meeting you."

"I perfectly well remember Perusa, Monsieur, and the Hôtel des Postes and the fête to which you allude," said Madame de Villefort; "but in vain do I tax my memory, of whose treachery I am ashamed, for I really do not recall to mind that I ever had the pleasure of seeing you before."

"It is strange; but neither do I recollect meeting with you," observed Valentine, raising her beautiful eyes to the count.

"But I remember it," said Édouard.

"I will assist your memory, Madame," continued the count. "The day had been burning hot; you were waiting for horses, which were delayed in consequence of the festival. Mademoiselle was walking in the shade of the garden, and your son disappeared in pursuit of the bird."

"And I caught it, Mamma, don't you remember?" said Édouard, "and I pulled three feathers from its tail."

"You, Madame, remained under the arbor formed by the vine; do you not remember that while you were seated on a stone bench, and while, as I told you, Mademoiselle de Villefort and your young son were absent, you conversed for a considerable time with somebody?"

"Yes, — in truth, yes," answered the young wife, turning very red, "I do remember conversing with a man wrapped in a long woollen mantle; he was a medical man, I think."

"Precisely so, Madame; that man was myself. For a fortnight I had been at that hotel, during which period I had cured my *valet de chambre* of a fever and my land-

lord of the jaundice; so that I had really acquired a reputation as a skilful physician. We talked a long time, Madame, of different subjects, — of Perugino, of Raphael, of manners, costumes, of the famous *aqua-tofana*, of which they had told you, I think you said, that certain persons in Perusa had preserved the secret."

"Yes, true," replied Madame de Villefort, hastily, and with a degree of uneasiness; "I remember now."

"I do not recollect now all the various subjects of which we discoursed, Madame," continued the count, with perfect calmness; "but I remember distinctly that falling into the error which others had entertained respecting me, you consulted me as to the health of Mademoiselle de Villefort."

"Yes, really, Monsieur; you were in fact a medical man," said Madame de Villefort, "since you had cured the sick."

"Molière or Beaumarchais would reply to you, Madame, that it was precisely because I was not that I had cured my patients; for myself, I am content to say to you that I have studied chemistry and the natural sciences somewhat deeply, but still only as an amateur, you understand."

At this moment the clock struck six. "It is six o'clock," said Madame de Villefort, evidently agitated. "Valentine, will you not go and see if your grandpapa will have his dinner?"

Valentine rose, and saluting the count, left the room without replying a single word.

"Oh, Madame!" said the count when Valentine had left the room, "was it on my account that you sent Mademoiselle de Villefort away?"

"By no means," replied the young woman, quickly; "but this is the hour when we give to M. Noirtier the sad repast which supports his [illegible] existence. You

are aware, Monsieur, of the deplorable condition of my husband's father?"

"Yes, Madame, M. de Villefort spoke of it to me, — a paralysis, I think."

"Alas, yes! there is an entire want of movement in the frame of the poor old man; the mind alone is still active in this human machine, and that is faint and flickering like the light of a lamp about to expire. But excuse me, sir, for talking of our domestic misfortunes; I interrupted you at the moment when you were telling me that you were a skilful chemist."

"No, Madame, I did not say so much as that," replied the count, with a smile; "quite the contrary. I have studied chemistry because having determined to live in Eastern climates, I have been desirous of following the example of King Mithridates."

"*Mithridates, rex Ponticus*," said the young scamp, as he cut some beautiful portraits out of a splendid album, "the individual who breakfasted every morning with a cup of poison *à la crême*."

"Édouard, you naughty boy!" exclaimed Madame de Villefort, snatching the mutilated book from the urchin's grasp; "you are unendurable; you disturb the conversation. Leave us, and join your sister Valentine in Grandpapa Noirtier's room."

"The album," said Édouard.

"What do you mean? the album!"

"I want the album."

"Why have you cut out the pictures?"

"Oh, it amuses me."

"Go; go directly."

"I won't go unless you give me the album," said the boy, seating himself doggedly in an armchair, according to his habit of never giving way.

"Take it, then, and disturb us no longer," said Madame de Villefort, giving the album to Édouard, who then went towards the door, led by his mother.

The count followed her with his eyes. "Let us see if she shuts the door after him," he muttered.

Madame de Villefort closed the door carefully after the child, the count appearing not to notice her; then casting a scrutinizing glance around the chamber, the young wife returned to her chair, in which she seated herself.

"Allow me to observe, Madame," said the count, with that kind tone he could assume so well, "you are really very severe with that charming child."

"Oh, sometimes severity is quite necessary," replied Madame de Villefort, with a true maternal emphasis.

"It was his Cornelius Nepos that Master Édouard was repeating when he referred to King Mithridates," continued the count; "and you interrupted him in a quotation which proves that his tutor has by no means neglected him, for your son is really advanced for his years."

"The fact is, Monsieur the Count," answered the mother, agreeably flattered, "he has great aptitude, and learns all that is set before him. He has but one fault,—he is somewhat wilful; but referring to what he said, do you believe that Mithridates used these precautions, and that these precautions were efficacious?"

"I think so, Madame, because I — I who now address you — have made use of them that I might not be poisoned at Naples, at Palermo, and at Smyrna; that is to say, on three several occasions when but for these precautions I must have lost my life."

"And your precautions were successful?"

"Completely so."

"Yes, I remember now your mentioning to me at Perusa *something of this sort.*"

"Indeed! did I?" said the count, with an air of surprise remarkably well counterfeited; "I really did not remember it."

"I inquired of you if poisons acted equally and with the same effect on men of the North as on men of the South; and you answered me that the cold and sluggish habits of the North did not present the same susceptibility to poison as the rich and energetic temperaments of the natives of the South."

"And that is the case," observed Monte Cristo. "I have seen Russians devour without being visibly inconvenienced vegetable substances which would infallibly have killed a Neapolitan or an Arab."

"And you really believe the result would be still more sure with us than in the East, and that in the midst of our fogs and rains a man would habituate himself more easily than in a warm latitude to this progressive absorption of poison."

"Certainly; it being at the same time understood that one is protected only against that poison to which he has accustomed himself."

"Yes, I understand that; and how would you habituate yourself, for instance, or rather how did you habituate yourself?"

"Oh, very easily. Suppose you knew beforehand the poison that would be made use of against you; suppose the poison was, for instance, brucine—"

"Brucine is extracted from the *Brucæa ferruginea*, is it not?" inquired Madame de Villefort.

"Precisely, Madame," replied Monte Cristo; "but I perceive I have not much to teach you. Allow me to compliment you on your knowledge; such learning is very rare among ladies."

"Oh, I am aware of that," said Madame de Villefort;

"but I have a passion for the occult sciences, which speak to the imagination like poetry, and are reducible to figures like an algebraic equation. But go on, I pray you; what you say interests me extremely."

"Well," replied Monte Cristo, "suppose, then, that this poison was brucine, and you were to take a milligramme the first day, two milligrammes the second day, and so on. Well, at the end of ten days you would take a centigramme; at the end of twenty days, adding another milligramme, you would take three centigrammes, — that is to say, a dose which you would support without inconvenience, but which would be very dangerous for any other person who had not taken the same precautions. Well, then, at the end of a month, when drinking water from the same *carafe*, you would kill the person who at the same time as yourself had drank this water, without your perceiving, otherwise than from slight inconvenience, that there was any poisonous substance mingled with this water."

"Do you know any other counter-poisons?"

"I do not."

"I have often read, and read again, the history of Mithridates," said Madame de Villefort, in a tone of reflection, "and have always considered it as a fable."

"No, Madame, contrary to most history, it is a truth; but what you tell me, Madame, what you inquire of me, is not the result of a chance question, — for two years since you asked me the same questions, and said too that for a very long time this history of Mithridates occupied your mind."

"True, Monsieur. The two favorite studies of my youth were botany and mineralogy; and subsequently, when I learned that the use of simples frequently explained the whole history of a people, and the entire life of individuals in the East, as flowers illustrate all their

thoughts of love, I have regretted I was not a man, that I might have been a Flamel, a Fontana, or a Cabanis."

"And the more, Madame," said Monte Cristo, "as the Orientals do not confine themselves, as did Mithridates, to make a cuirass of his poisons, but they also make them a dagger. Science becomes in their hands, not only a defensive weapon, but still more frequently an offensive one. The one serves against all their physical sufferings; the other against all their enemies. With opium, with belladonna, with brucæa, snake-wood, the cherry-laurel, they put to sleep all those who would keep them awake. There is not one of those women, — Egyptian, Turk, or Greek, — whom here you call 'good women,' who do not know how, by means of chemistry, to stupefy a doctor, and in psychology to amaze a confessor."

"Really!" said Madame de Villefort, whose eyes sparkled with strange fire at this conversation.

"Eh, indeed! Yes, Madame," continued Monte Cristo, "the secret dramas of the East begin and end thus, from the plant which can create love to the plant that can cause death; from the draught which opens heaven before your eyes to that which plunges a man in hell! There are as many shades of every kind as there are caprices and peculiarities in human, physical, and moral nature; and I will say further, the art of these chemists knows how to accommodate the remedy and the ill to its yearnings of love or its desires for vengeance."

"But, Monsieur," remarked the lady, "those Oriental societies, in the midst of which you have passed a portion of your existence, are as visionary as the tales that come from their strange land. A man can easily be put out of the way there, then; it is indeed the Bagdad and Bassora of M. Galland. The sultans and viziers, who rule over those societies, and who constitute what in France we call the

Government, are in fact Haroun-al-Raschids and Giaffars, who not only pardon a poisoner, but even make him a prime minister if his crime has been an ingenious one, and who under such circumstances have the whole story written in letters of gold, to divert their hours of idleness and *ennui*."

"By no means, Madame; the fanciful exists no longer in the East. There are there now, disguised under other names, and concealed under other costumes, agents of police, magistrates, attorney-generals, and bailiffs. They hang, behead, and impale their criminals in the most agreeable manner possible; but some of these, like clever rogues, have contrived to escape human justice and succeed in their fraudulent enterprises by cunning stratagems. Among us a simpleton possessed by the demon of hate or cupidity, who has an enemy to destroy, or some near relative to dispose of, goes straight to the grocer's or druggist's, gives a false name, which leads more easily to his detection than his real one, and purchases under a pretext that the rats prevent him from sleeping five or six grams of arsenic; if he is really a cunning fellow, he goes to five or six different druggists or grocers, and thereby becomes only five or six times more easily traced. Then, when he has acquired his specific, he administers duly to his enemy or near kinsman a dose of arsenic which would make a mammoth or mastodon burst, and which without rhyme or reason makes his victim utter groans which alarm the entire neighborhood. Then arrive a crowd of policemen and constables. They fetch a doctor, who opens the dead body, and collects from the entrails and stomach a quantity of arsenic in a spoon. Next day a hundred newspapers relate the fact, with the names of the victim and the murderer. The same evening the grocer or grocers, druggist or druggists, come and say, 'It was I who

sold the arsenic to the gentleman accused;' and rather than not recognize the guilty purchaser, they will recognize twenty. Then the foolish criminal is taken, imprisoned, interrogated, confronted, confounded, condemned, and cut off by hemp or steel; or if she be a woman of any consideration, they lock her up for life. This is the way in which you Northerners understand chemistry, Madame. Desrues was, however, I must confess, more skilful."

"What would you have, Monsieur?" said the lady, laughing; "we do what we can. All the world has not the secret of the Medicis or the Borgias."

"Now," replied the count, shrugging his shoulders, "shall I tell you the cause of all these stupidities? It is because at your theatres, by what at least I could judge by reading the pieces they play, they see persons swallow the contents of a phial, or suck the button of a ring, and fall dead instantly. Five minutes afterwards the curtain falls; and the spectators depart. They are ignorant of what comes afterwards. They see neither the commissary of police with his badge of office, nor the corporal with his four men; and that persuades many weak minds to believe that things happen in that way. But go a little way from France; go either to Aleppo or Cairo, or only to Naples or Rome, and you will see people passing by you in the streets, — people erect, smiling, and fresh-colored, of whom Asmodeus, if he were near you, would say, 'That man was poisoned three weeks ago; he will be a dead man in a month.'"

"Then," remarked Madame de Villefort, "they have again discovered the secret of the famous *aqua-tofana* which they told me at Perusa had been lost."

"Eh, indeed, does mankind ever lose anything? The arts are removed, and make a tour of the world. Things change their names, and the vulgar do not follow them, —

that is all; but there is always the same result. Poison acts particularly on one organ or the other, — one on the stomach, another on the brain, another on the intestines. Well, the poison brings on a cough, the cough an inflammation of the lungs, or some other complaint catalogued in the book of science, which however by no means precludes it from being decidedly mortal; and if it were not, it would be sure to become so, thanks to the remedies applied by foolish doctors, who are generally bad chemists, which will act in favor of or against the malady, as you please. And then there is a human being killed according to all the rules of art and skill, in regard to whom justice makes no inquiries, as was said by a terrible chemist of my acquaintance, the worthy Abbé Adelmonte de Taormine, in Sicily, who has studied these national phenomena very profoundly."

"It is frightful, but deeply interesting," said the young woman, motionless with attention. "I thought, I must confess, that these tales were inventions of the Middle Ages."

"Yes, no doubt, but improved upon in our own age. What is the use of time, encouragements, medals, crosses, and Monthyon prizes, if they do not lead society towards perfection? Yet man will never be perfect until he learns to create and destroy, like God; he does know how to destroy, and that is halfway on the road."

"So," added Madame de Villefort, constantly returning to her object, "the poisons of the Borgias, the Medicis, the Renés, the Ruggieris, and later probably that of Baron de Trenck, whose story has been so misused by modern drama and romance — "

"Were objects of art, Madame, and nothing more," replied the count. "Do you suppose that the real *savant* addresses himself stupidly to the mere individual? By

no means. Science loves eccentricities, leaps, and bounds, trials of strength, fancies, if I may be allowed so to term them. Thus, for instance, the excellent Abbé Adelmonte, of whom I spoke to you just now, made on this subject some marvellous experiments."

"Really!"

"Yes; I will mention one to you. He had a remarkably fine garden, full of vegetables, flowers, and fruit. From among these vegetables he selected the most simple, —a cabbage, for instance. For three days he watered this cabbage with a distillation of arsenic; on the third, the cabbage began to droop and turn yellow. At that moment he cut it. In the eyes of everybody it seemed fit for table, and preserved its wholesome appearance. In the knowledge of the Abbé Adelmonte alone it was poisoned. He then took the cabbage to the room where he had rabbits, — for the Abbé Adelmonte had a collection of rabbits, cats, and guinea-pigs as fine as his collection of vegetables, flowers, and fruit. Well, the Abbé Adelmonte took a rabbit, and made it eat a leaf of the cabbage. The rabbit died. What magistrate would find, or even venture to insinuate anything against this? What *procureur du roi* has ever ventured to draw up an accusation against M. Magendie or M. Flourens, in consequence of the rabbits, cats, and guinea-pigs they have killed? Not one. So, then, the rabbit dies, and justice takes no notice. This rabbit dead, the Abbé Adelmonte has its entrails taken out by his cook and thrown on the dunghill; on this dunghill is a hen, who pecking these intestines is in her turn taken ill, and dies next day. At the moment when she is struggling in the convulsions of death a vulture is flying by (there are a good many vultures in Adelmonte's country); this bird darts on the dead bird and carries it away to a rock, where it dines off its prey. Three days

afterwards this poor vulture, who has been very much indisposed since that dinner, feels very giddy suddenly while flying aloft in the clouds, and falls heavily into a fish-pond. The pike, eels, and carp eat greedily always, as everybody knows; they feast on the vulture. Well, suppose the next day one of these eels, or pike, or carp is served at your table, poisoned as they are in the fourth degree. Well, then, your guest will be poisoned in the fifth degree, and will die at the end of eight or ten days of pains in the intestines, sickness, or abscess of the pylorus. The doctors open the body and say, 'The subject has died of a tumor on the liver, or of typhoid fever!'"

"But," remarked Madame de Villefort, "all these circumstances which you link thus one to another may be broken by the least accident; the vulture may not pass in season, or may fall a hundred yards from the fish-pond."

"Ah, just there is the province of art. To be a great chemist in the East we must direct chance; and this is to be achieved."

Madame de Villefort was deep in thought, yet listened attentively. "But," she exclaimed suddenly, "arsenic is indelible, indestructible; in what way soever it is absorbed, it will be found again in the body of the creature from the moment when it has been taken in sufficient quantity to cause death."

"Precisely so," cried Monte Cristo, — "precisely so; and this is what I said to my worthy Adelmonte. He reflected, smiled, and replied to me by a Sicilian proverb, which I believe is also a French proverb, 'My son, the world was not made in a day, but in seven. Return on Sunday.' On the Sunday following I did return to him. Instead of having watered his cabbage with arsenic, he had watered it this time with a solution of salts, having

their basis in strychnine, *strychnos colubrina*, as the learned term it. Now, the cabbage had not the slightest appearance of disease in the world, and the rabbit had not the smallest distrust; yet five minutes afterwards the rabbit was dead. The fowl pecked at the rabbit, and the next day was dead. We were the vultures, so we opened the fowl, and this time all particular symptoms had disappeared; there were only general symptoms. There was no peculiar indication in any organ, — an excitement of the nervous system only; a case of cerebral congestion. The fowl had not been poisoned; she had died of apoplexy. Apoplexy is a rare disease among fowls, I believe, but very common among men."

Madame de Villefort appeared more and more reflective. "It is very fortunate," she observed, "that such substances could only be prepared by chemists, for otherwise, indeed, one half the world would poison the other half."

"By chemists and persons who have a taste for chemistry," said Monte Cristo, carelessly.

"And then," said Madame de Villefort, endeavoring by a struggle, and with effort, to get away from her thoughts, "however skilfully it is prepared, crime is always crime; and if it avoid human scrutiny, it does not escape the eye of God. The Orientals are stronger than we are in cases of conscience, and have prudently abolished hell, — that is the difference."

"Really, Madame, this is a scruple which naturally must occur to a pure mind like yours, but which would easily yield before sound reasoning. The bad side of human thought will always be defined by the paradox of Jean Jacques Rousseau, you know, — 'the mandarin who is killed at five thousand leagues' distance by raising the tip of the finger.' Man's whole life passes in doing these things, and his intellect is exhausted by reflecting on them.

You will find very few persons who will go and brutally thrust a knife in the heart of a fellow-creature, or will administer to him, in order to remove him from the surface of the globe, that quantity of arsenic of which we just now talked. Such a thing is really out of rule, — eccentric or stupid. To attain such a point the blood must be warmed to thirty-six degrees, the pulse be at least at ninety, and the feelings excited beyond the ordinary limit. But if, passing, as we do in philology, from the word itself to its softened synonyme, you make an elimination; if instead of committing an ignoble assassination, you merely and simply remove from your path him who is in your way, and that without shock or violence, without the display of those sufferings which becoming a punishment make a martyr of the victim, and of him who inflicts them a butcher in every sense of the word; if there be no blood, no groans, no convulsions, nor, above all, that horrible and compromising instantaneousness of the deed, — then one escapes the clutch of the human law, which says to you, 'Do not disturb society!' This is the mode in which they manage these things and succeed in Eastern climes, where there are grave and phlegmatic persons who care very little for the matter of time in conjunctures of importance."

"Yet conscience remains!" remarked Madame de Villefort, in an agitated voice, and with a stifled sigh.

"Yes," answered Monte Cristo, "happily, yes, conscience does remain; and if it did not, how wretched we should be! After every action requiring exertion it is conscience that saves us, for it supplies us with a thousand good excuses, of which we alone are judges; and these reasons, how excellent soever in producing sleep, would avail perhaps but little to save our lives before a tribunal. Thus Richard III., for instance, was marvellously served

by his conscience after the putting away of the two children of Edward IV.; in fact, he could say, 'These two children of a cruel and persecuting king, who have inherited the vices of their father, which I alone could perceive in their juvenile propensities, — these two children are impediments in my way of promoting the happiness of the English people, to whom they would undoubtedly have done harm.' Thus was Lady Macbeth served by her conscience, when she sought to give her son, and not her husband, whatever Shakespeare may say, a throne. Ah, maternal love is a great virtue, a powerful motive, — so powerful that it excuses a multitude of things; so that after the death of Duncan, Lady Macbeth would have been very miserable without her conscience."

Madame de Villefort listened with avidity to these appalling maxims and horrible paradoxes, delivered by the count with that ironical simplicity which was peculiar to him. After a moment's silence she said, "Do you know, Monsieur the Count, that you are a very terrible reasoner, and that you look at the world through a somewhat distempered medium? Is it, then, because you have studied humanity through alembics and crucibles? For you are right, you are a great chemist; and the elixir you administered to my son, which recalled him to life almost instantaneously — "

"Oh, do not place any reliance on that, Madame. *One* drop of that elixir sufficed to recall life to a dying child, but three drops would have impelled the blood into his lungs in such a way as to have produced most violent palpitations; six would have suspended his respiration and caused syncope more serious than that in which he was; ten would have destroyed him. You know, Madame, how suddenly I snatched him from those phials which he so imprudently touched."

"Is it, then, so terrible a poison?"

"Oh, no! In the first place, let us agree that the word 'poison' does not exist; because in medicine use is made of the most violent poisons, which become, according as they are made use of, salutary remedies."

"What, then, is it?"

"A skilful preparation by my friend, the worthy Abbé Adelmonte, who taught me the use of it."

"Oh," observed Madame de Villefort, "it must be an admirable anti-spasmodic."

"Perfect, Madame, as you have seen," replied the count; "and I frequently make use of it, — with all possible prudence, though, be it observed," he added, smiling.

"Most assuredly," responded Madame de Villefort, in the same tone. "As for me, so nervous, and so subject to fainting-fits, I should require a Dr. Adelmonte to invent for me some means of breathing freely, and tranquillizing my mind, in the fear I have of dying some fine day of suffocation. In the mean while, as the thing is difficult to find in France, and your abbé is not probably disposed to make a journey to Paris on my account, I must continue to use the anti-spasmodics of M. Planché; and mint and Hoffmann's drops are among my favorite remedies. Here are some lozenges which are made expressly for me; they are compounded doubly strong."

Monte Cristo opened the tortoise-shell box, which the young woman presented to him, and imbibed the odor of the lozenges with the air of an amateur who thoroughly appreciated their composition. "They are indeed exquisite," he said; "but as they are necessarily submitted to the process of deglutition, — a function which it is frequently impossible for a fainting person to accomplish, — I prefer my own specific."

"Undoubtedly; and so should I prefer it, after the effects I have seen produced. But of course it is a secret; and I am not so indiscreet as to ask it of you."

"But I," said Monte Cristo, rising as he spoke, — "I am gallant enough to offer it you."

"Oh, Monsieur!"

"Only remember one thing: a small dose is a remedy; a large one is poison. One drop will restore life, as you have witnessed; five or six will inevitably kill, and in a way the more terrible, inasmuch as poured into a glass of wine, it would not in the slightest degree affect its flavor. But I say no more, Madame; it is really as if I were advising you."

The clock struck half-past six, and a lady was announced, — a friend of Madame de Villefort, who came to dine with her.

"If I had the honor of seeing you for the third or fourth time, Monsieur the Count, instead of for only the second," said Madame de Villefort; "if I had the honor of being your friend, instead of having only the happiness of lying under an obligation to you, — I should insist on detaining you to dinner, and not allow myself to be daunted by a first refusal."

"A thousand thanks, Madame," replied Monte Cristo, "but I have an engagement which I cannot break: I have promised to escort to the Académie a Greek princess of my acquaintance who has never seen your grand opera, and who relies on me to conduct her thither."

"Adieu, then, sir, and do not forget my recipe."

"Ah, in truth, Madame, to do that I must forget the hour's conversation I have had with you, which is indeed impossible."

Monte Cristo bowed and left the house. Madame de Villefort remained immersed in thought. "He is a very

strange man," she said, "and in my opinion is himself the Adelmonte he talks about."

As to Monte Cristo, the result had surpassed his utmost expectations. "Good!" said he, as he went away; "this is a fruitful soil, and I feel certain that the seed sown will not be cast on barren ground." Next morning, faithful to his promise, he sent the desired prescription.

CHAPTER XVI.

"ROBERT LE DIABLE."

THE pretext of an opera engagement was the more plausible since there chanced to be on that very night a more than ordinary attraction at the Académie Royale. Levasseur, who had been suffering under severe illness, made his reappearance in the character of Bertram; and as usual, the announcement of the most admired production of the favorite composer of the day had attracted an audience consisting of the very *élite* of Parisian fashion. Morcerf, like most other young men of rank and fortune, had his orchestral stall, with the certainty of always finding a seat in at least a dozen of the principal boxes occupied by persons of his acquaintance; he had, moreover, his right of entry into the box of the "lions." Château-Renaud rented a stall near his own, while Beauchamp, in his editorial capacity, had unlimited range all over the theatre. It happened that on that particular night the minister's box was placed at the disposal of Lucien Debray, who offered it to the Comte de Morcerf, who upon Mercédès's refusal of it, sent it to Danglars, with an intimation that he should probably do himself the honor of joining the baroness and her daughter during the evening, in the event of their accepting the box in question. The ladies received the offer with too much pleasure to dream of a refusal. To no one else is a free opera-box so acceptable as to a millionnaire.

Danglars had however declared that his political principles and his position as a member of the opposition would not permit him to use the minister's box; the baroness had therefore despatched a note to Lucien Debray, bidding him call for them, since she could not go to the opera with Eugénie alone. And in fact, if the two women had gone thither without an escort the world would have put a bad construction on it; but should Mademoiselle Danglars go to the opera with her mother and her mother's lover, the world would have no fault to find. We must take the world as we find it.

The curtain rose as usual to an almost empty house, it being one of the absurdities of Parisian fashion never to appear at the opera until after the performance has begun, so that the first act is generally played without the slightest attention being paid to it, that part of the audience already assembled being occupied in observing the new arrivals; while the noise of opening and shutting doors, with the mingled buzz of many conversations, makes it impossible to hear anything else.

"See," said Albert, as the door of a box on the first circle opened, "there is the Comtesse G ——."

"And who may she be, pray?" inquired Château-Renaud.

"Oh, Baron! an unpardonable question! You ask who is the Comtesse G ——?"

"Ah, to be sure!" replied Château-Renaud; "I remember now, — your lovely Venetian, is it not?"

"Herself."

At this moment the countess perceived Albert and returned his salutation with a smile.

"You are acquainted with her, it seems?" said Château-Renaud.

"Yes. Franz presented me to her at Rome," replied Albert.

"Well, then, will you do for me in Paris what he did for you in Rome?"

"With much pleasure."

"Silence!" exclaimed the audience.

This manifestation on the part of the spectators of their wish to be allowed to enjoy the rich music then issuing from the stage and orchestra, produced no effect on the two young men, who continued talking as though they had not even heard it.

"The countess was present at the races in the Champ de Mars," said Château-Renaud.

"To-day?"

"Yes."

"Bless me! I quite forgot the races. Did you bet?"

"Oh, a trifle, — fifty louis."

"And who was the winner?"

"Nautilus. I betted on him."

"But there were three races, were there not?"

"Yes; there was the prize given by the Jockey Club, — a gold cup, you know; and a very singular circumstance occurred in that race."

"What was it?"

"Silence!" again vociferated the music-loving part of the audience.

"Why, that it was gained by a horse and rider utterly unknown on the course."

"Is it possible?"

"True as day. Nobody had observed a horse entered by the name of Vampa, or a jockey styled Job, when a splendid roan and a jockey about as big as your fist presented themselves at the starting-post. They were obliged to stuff at least twenty pounds' weight of shot in the small rider's pockets to make him heavy enough; but with all

that he outstripped Ariel and Barbare, against whom he ran, by at least three whole lengths."

"And was it not found out at last to whom the horse and jockey belonged?"

"No."

"You say that the horse was entered under the name of —"

"'Vampa.'"

"Then," answered Albert, "I am better informed than you are; I know who is the owner of that horse!"

"Silence there!" came from the audience. And this time the tone and manner in which the command was given betokened such growing hostility that the two young men perceived for the first time that the mandate was addressed to them. Turning round, they searched the crowd for some one person who would take upon himself the responsibility of what they deemed an impertinence; but as no one responded to the challenge, the friends turned again towards the stage. At this moment the door of the minister's box opened, and Madame Danglars, her daughter, and Lucien Debray, took their places.

"Ha, ha!" said Château-Renaud, "here come some friends of yours, Viscount! What are you looking at there? Don't you see they are trying to catch your eye?" Albert turned round just in time to receive a gracious wave of the fan from Madame the Baroness; as for Mademoiselle Eugénie, she scarcely vouchsafed to waste the glances of her large black eyes even upon the business of the stage.

"I tell you what, my dear fellow," said Château-Renaud, "I cannot imagine what objection you can possibly have to Mademoiselle Danglars — that is, setting aside her want of ancestry and somewhat inferior rank, which,

by the way, I don't think you care very much about. She seems to me a very fine-looking girl."

"Handsome, certainly," replied Albert, "but not to my taste, which, I confess, inclines to a softer, gentler, and more feminine style than hers."

"Bless my heart!" exclaimed Château-Renaud, who, as a man thirty years old, assumed a paternal air towards Morcerf, "you young people are never satisfied. Why, what would you have more? Your parents have chosen you a bride who might serve as the living model of the 'Hunting Diana,' and yet you are not content."

"No, for that very resemblance affrights me. I should have liked something more in the manner of the Venus of Milo or Capua; but this chase-loving Diana continually surrounded by her nymphs gives me a sort of alarm, lest she should some day entail on me the fate of Actæon."

And indeed it required but one glance at Mademoiselle Danglars to discover the significance of Morcerf's remark. She was handsome, but, as Albert had said, with a beauty somewhat too pronounced. Her hair was raven black, but amid its natural waves might be discerned a certain resistance to the hand that sought to control it; her eyes, of the same color as her hair, were richly fringed and surmounted by well-arched brows, whose great defect, however, consisted in an almost habitual frown, while her whole physiognomy wore an expression of firmness and decision little in accordance with the gentler attributes of her sex; her nose was precisely what a sculptor would have given to a chiselled Juno; her mouth, which might have been found fault with as too large, displayed teeth of pearly whiteness, rendered still more conspicuous by the overredness of her lips, beside which her naturally pale complexion seemed even more colorless. But that which completed the almost masculine look Morcerf found so

little to his taste was a dark mole of much larger dimensions than these freaks of nature generally are, placed just at the corner of her mouth; and the effect tended to increase the expression of unbending resolution and self-dependence that formed the characteristics of her countenance. The rest of Mademoiselle Eugénie's person was in perfect keeping with the head just described; she indeed reminded you of the "Hunting Diana," as Château-Renaud observed, but with something still more resolute and masculine in her beauty. As regarded her attainments, the only fault to be found with them was the same that a fastidious connoisseur might have found with her beauty, — that they were such as belonged to the other sex. She spoke two or three languages, was a good artist, wrote poetry, and composed music. To the latter art she professed to be entirely devoted, studying it with one of her school-friends, who, without fortune, had every disposition to become — as she was assured she might — an excellent singer. A celebrated composer was said to take an almost paternal interest in this young woman last mentioned, whom he stimulated to work diligently in the hope that she might find a fortune in her voice. The possibility that Mademoiselle Louise d'Armilly might sometime go upon the stage prevented Mademoiselle Danglars from appearing with her in public, although still receiving her at home. But though Louise had not in the house of the banker the independent position of a friend, her position was superior to that of the ordinary governess.

The curtain fell almost immediately after the entrance of Madame Danglars into her box; the band quitted the orchestra for the accustomed interval allowed between the acts; and the audience were left at liberty to promenade the salon or lobbies, or to pay and receive visits in their respective boxes. Morcerf and Château-Renaud were

among the first to avail themselves of this opportunity. For an instant the idea struck Madame Danglars that this eagerness on the part of the young viscount arose from his impatience to join her party; and she whispered to her daughter that Albert was hurrying to pay his respects to them. The latter, however, shook her head, smiling. At the same moment, as if to show that her incredulity was well founded, Morcerf was seen in a box in the first circle; it was the box of Comtesse G——.

"Ah! you have arrived, Monsieur," cried the countess, extending her hand to him with all the warmth and cordiality of an old acquaintance; "it was really very good of you to recognize me so quickly, and still more so to bestow your first visit on me."

"Be assured," replied Albert, "that if I had been aware of your arrival in Paris, and had known your address, I should have paid my respects to you long ere this. Allow me to introduce my friend, Baron de Château-Renaud, one of the few gentlemen now to be found in France. I have just learned from him that you were at the races in the Champ de Mars yesterday."

Château-Renaud bowed to the countess.

"Ah! you were at the races, Monsieur?" inquired the countess, eagerly.

"I was, Madame."

"Well, then," pursued Madame G——, with considerable animation, "you can probably tell me to whom belonged the winner of the Jockey-Club stakes?"

"I am sorry to say I cannot," replied the baron; "I was just asking the same question of Albert."

"Are you very anxious to know, Madame the Countess?" asked Albert.

"To know what?"

"The owner of the winning horse?"

"Exceedingly; only imagine — but do you know, Monsieur the Viscount, who he is?"

"Madame, you were about to relate some story. You said 'only imagine.'"

"Well, then, listen! You must know I felt so interested for the splendid roan horse, with his elegant little rider so tastefully dressed in a pink satin jacket and cap, that I could not help praying for their success with as much earnestness as though the half of my fortune were at stake; and when I saw them outstrip all the others and come to the winning-post in such gallant style, I actually clapped my hands with joy. Imagine my surprise, when upon returning home I met on the staircase the jockey in the pink jacket! I concluded that by some singular chance the owner of the winning horse must live in the same hotel as myself; but, lo! as I entered my salon I beheld the gold cup awarded as a prize to the unknown horse and rider. Inside the cup was a small piece of paper, on which were written these words, 'From Lord Ruthven to Comtesse G——.'"

"Precisely; I was sure of it," said Morcerf.

"Sure of what?"

"That the owner of the horse was Lord Ruthven himself."

"What Lord Ruthven do you mean?"

"Why, our Lord Ruthven, — the Vampire of the Theatre Argentina!"

"Truly?" exclaimed the countess; "is he here, then?"

"To be sure; why not?"

"And you visit him? — meet him at your own house and elsewhere?"

"I assure you that he is my most intimate friend, and M. de Château-Renaud has also the honor of his acquaintance."

"But what makes you think it is he who took the prize?"

"Was not the winning horse entered by the name of 'Vampa'?"

"What of that?"

"Why, do you not recollect the name of the celebrated bandit by whom I was made prisoner?"

"Ah! that is true."

"And from whose hands the count extricated me in so wonderful a manner?"

"To be sure."

"His name was Vampa. You see, then, that it is he."

"But what could have been his motive for sending the cup to me?"

"In the first place, because I had spoken much of you to him, as you may believe; and in the second, because he delighted to see a countrywoman, and to see her take so lively an interest in his success."

"I hope you never repeated to him all the foolish remarks we used to make about him?"

"I should not like to affirm upon oath that I have not. Besides, his presenting you the cup under the name of Lord Ruthven proves his knowledge of the comparison instituted between himself and that individual."

"Oh, but that is dreadful! Why, the man must mortally hate me."

"His action is hardly that of an enemy."

"No; certainly not."

"Well, then —"

"And so he is in Paris?"

"He is."

"And what effect does he produce?"

"Why," said Albert, "he was talked of for a week. hen the coronation of the Queen of England took place,

and the theft of Mademoiselle Mars's diamonds; and two such interesting events turned public attention into other channels."

"My dear fellow," said Château-Renaud, "it is clear that the count is your friend, and you speak of him accordingly. Do not believe what Albert is telling you, Madame the Countess; so far from the sensation excited in the Parisian circles by the appearance of the Count of Monte Cristo having abated, I take upon myself to declare that it is as strong as ever. His first astounding act upon coming among us was to present a pair of horses, worth thirty thousand livres, to Madame Danglars; his second, the almost miraculous preservation of Madame de Villefort's life; now it seems that he has carried off the prize awarded by the Jockey Club! I therefore maintain, in spite of whatever Morcerf may advance, not only that the count is the object of universal interest at this present moment, but that he will be still more so a month hence if he continues to display those eccentricities which seem to be his ordinary characteristics."

"Perhaps you are right," said Morcerf; "meanwhile, who has taken the Russian ambassador's box?"

"Which box do you mean?" asked the countess.

"The one between the pillars on the first tier; it seems to have been entirely made over."

"So it does," said Château-Renaud. "Was any one there during the first act?"

"Where?"

"In that box."

"No," replied the countess; "it was certainly empty during the first act." Then, returning to the subject of their previous conversation, she said, "And so you really believe it was your Count of Monte Cristo who gained the prize?"

"I am sure of it."

"And who afterwards sent the golden cup to me?"

"Undoubtedly."

"But I do not know him," said the countess; "I have a strong inclination to return it."

"Do no such thing, I beg of you; he would only send you a second goblet, formed of a magnificent sapphire, or hollowed out of a gigantic ruby. It is his manner of acting, and you must take him as you find him."

At this moment the bell rang to announce the drawing up of the curtain for the second act. Albert rose to return to his place.

"Shall I see you again?" asked the countess.

"If you will permit me to make a second visit in the next pause in the opera, I will do myself the honor of coming to inquire whether there is anything in which I can be useful to you in Paris?"

"Pray take notice," said the countess, "that my present residence is 22 Rue de Rivoli, and that I am at home to my friends every Saturday evening. So now, you gentlemen cannot plead ignorance."

The young men bowed, and quitted the box. Upon reaching their stalls they found the whole of the audience in the *parterre* standing up and directing their gaze towards the box formerly possessed by the ambassador of Russia. A man of from thirty-five to forty years of age, dressed in deep black, had just entered, accompanied by a woman dressed after the Eastern style; the woman was young and surpassingly beautiful, while the rich magnificence of her attire drew all eyes upon her.

"By heavens!" said Albert, "it is Monte Cristo himself, with his Greek!"

The strangers were indeed no other than the count and Haydée. The sensation excited by the beauty and dazzling

appearance of the latter soon communicated itself to every part of the theatre; the ladies leaned forward from the boxes to see the glitter of that cascade of diamonds. During the second act there was the continual buzzing sound which in a crowded assembly marks the occurrence of some striking event. No one thought of calling for silence. That woman, so young, so beautiful, so dazzling, was the most interesting spectacle that was presented. Upon this occasion an unmistakable sign from Madame Danglars intimated her desire to see Albert in her box as soon as the curtain should fall on the second act; and neither the politeness nor good taste of Morcerf would permit his neglecting an invitation so unequivocally given. At the close of the act he therefore proceeded to the baroness's box. Having bowed to the two ladies, he extended his hand to Debray. By the baroness he was most graciously welcomed, while Eugénie received him with her accustomed coldness.

"My dear fellow!" said Debray, "you have come in the very nick of time to help a fellow-creature regularly beaten and at a standstill. There is Madame overwhelming me with questions respecting the count; she insists upon it that I can tell her his birth, education, and parentage, where he came from, and whither he is going. Being no Cagliostro, by way of getting out of the scrape, I said 'Ask Morcerf; he has the whole history of Monte Cristo at his fingers' ends;' whereupon the baroness made you a sign to come hither."

"Is it not almost incredible," said Madame Danglars, "that a person having at least half a million of secret-service money at his command, should possess so little information?"

"Let me assure you, Madame," said Lucien, "that had I really the sum you mention at my disposal, I would em-

ploy it more profitably than in troubling myself to obtain particulars respecting the Count of Monte Cristo, whose only merit in my eyes consists in his being twice as rich as a nabob. However, I have turned the business over to Morcerf, so pray settle it with him, — it does not concern me any longer."

"I am very sure no nabob would have sent me a pair of horses worth thirty thousand livres, wearing on their heads four diamonds valued at five thousand livres each."

"He seems to have a mania for diamonds," said Morcerf, smiling; "and I verily believe that like Potemkin he keeps his pockets filled to strew them along the road as little Thumb did his flint-stones."

"Perhaps he has discovered some mine," said Madame Danglars. "I suppose you know he has an order for unlimited credit on the baron's banking establishment?"

"I was not aware of it," replied Albert, "but I can readily believe it."

"And he has stated to M. Danglars his intention of staying only a year in Paris, during which time he proposes to spend six millions. He must be the Shah of Persia, travelling *incognito*."

"Have you remarked the extreme beauty of that young woman by whom he is accompanied, M. Lucien?" inquired Eugénie.

"I really never met with a woman so ready to do justice to the charms of another as yourself." Lucien raised his lorgnette to his eye. "Charming!" said he.

"Who is this young person, M. de Morcerf?" inquired Eugénie; "does anybody know?"

"Mademoiselle," said Albert, replying to this direct appeal, "I know a little on that subject, as well as on most points relative to the singular person of whom we are now conversing. That young woman is a Greek."

"So I should presume by her dress; if therefore you know no more than that one self-evident fact, all the spectators in the theatre are as well-informed as yourself."

"I am extremely sorry you find me so ignorant a *cicerone*," replied Morcerf; "but I am obliged to confess that I have nothing further to communicate, — yes, I do know one thing more, namely, that she is a musician, for one day when I chanced to be breakfasting with the count I heard the sounds of a *guzla*, — sounds which certainly could have been made only by her."

"Then your count entertains visitors, does he?" asked Madame Danglars.

"Indeed he does, and in a most noble manner, I can assure you."

"I must try and persuade M. Danglars to invite him to a ball or dinner, or something of the sort, that he may be compelled to ask us in return."

"What!" said Debray, laughing; "do you really mean you would go to his house?"

"Why not? My husband could accompany me."

"But do you know this mysterious count is a bachelor?"

"You have ample proof to the contrary, if you look opposite," said the baroness, as she laughingly pointed to the beautiful Greek.

"No, no!" exclaimed Debray; "that female is not his wife. He told us himself she was his slave. Do you not recollect, Morcerf, his telling us so at your breakfast?"

"Well, then," said the baroness, "if slave she be, she has all the air and manner of a princess."

"Of the 'Arabian Nights'?"

"If you like; but tell me, my dear Lucien, what is it that constitutes a princess? Diamonds, and she is covered with them."

"To me she seems overloaded," observed Eugénia

"She would look far better if she wore fewer; and we should then be able to see her finely-formed throat and wrists."

"See how the artist peeps out!" exclaimed Madame Danglars; "my poor Eugénie, you must conceal your passion for the fine arts."

"I admire all that is beautiful in art or nature," returned the young lady.

"What do you think of the count, then?" inquired Debray; "he is not much amiss according to my ideas of good looks."

"The count?" repeated Eugénie, as though it had not occurred to her to observe him sooner, — "the count? oh, he is so dreadfully pale!"

"I quite agree with you," said Morcerf; "and in that very paleness lies the secret we want to find out. The Comtesse G —— insists upon it he is a vampire."

"Then the Comtesse G —— has returned to Paris, has she?" inquired the baroness.

"There she is, Mamma," said Eugénie; "almost opposite to us, with that profusion of beautiful light hair."

"Yes, yes, there she is!" cried Madame Danglars; "shall I tell you what you ought to do, Morcerf?"

"Command me, Madame; I am all attention."

"Well, then, you should go and bring your Count of Monte Cristo to us."

"What for?" asked Eugénie.

"What for? Why, to converse with him, of course; if you have no curiosity to hear whether he expresses himself like other people, I can assure you I have. Have you really no desire to see him?"

"None whatever," replied Eugénie.

"Strange girl!" murmured the baroness.

"He will very probably come of his own accord," said

Morcerf. "There! do you see, Madame, he recognizes you and bows."

The baroness returned the salute in the most smiling and graceful manner.

"Well," said Morcerf, "I sacrifice myself. Adieu; I will go and see if there is any chance of speaking to him."

"Go straight to his box; that will be the simplest plan."

"But I have never been presented."

"Presented to whom?"

"To the beautiful Greek."

"You say she is only a slave?"

"While you assert that she is a princess. No, no, I cannot venture to enter his box; but I hope that when he sees me leave you, he will come out of his box."

"It is possible; go."

Morcerf bowed and went out. Just as he was passing the count's box, the door opened, and Monte Cristo came forth. After giving some directions to Ali, who stood in the lobby, the count observed Albert, and taking his arm walked onwards with him. Carefully closing the box-door, Ali placed himself before it, while a crowd of wondering spectators assembled round the Nubian.

"Upon my word," said Monte Cristo, "Paris is a strange city, and the Parisians a very singular people. One might suppose he was the only Nubian they had ever beheld. See them crowd around poor Ali, who does n't know what it means. I assure you that a Frenchman might show himself in public, either in Tunis, Constantinople, Bagdad, or Cairo, without drawing a circle of gazers around him."

"That shows that the people of the East have too much good sense to waste their time and attention on objects undeserving of either. However, as far as Ali is concerned, *I can assure* you that the interest he excites arises from

the fact that he belongs to you, who are at this moment the most celebrated person in Paris."

"Really? and what has procured me so flattering a distinction?"

"What? Why, yourself, to be sure! You give away horses worth a thousand louis; you save the lives of ladies of high rank and beauty; you send to the race-course, under the name of Major Brack, horses of pure blood and jockeys not larger than marmots; then, when you have carried off the golden trophy of victory, instead of setting any value on it, you give it to the first handsome woman you think of!"

"And who has filled your head with all this nonsense?"

"Why, in the first place, I heard it from Madame Danglars, who, by the bye, is dying to see you in her box, or to have you seen there by others; secondly, I learned it from Beauchamp's journal; and thirdly, from my own imagination. Why, if you sought concealment, did you call your horse Vampa?"

"That was an oversight, certainly," replied the count; "but tell me, does the Comte de Morcerf never visit the opera? I have been looking for him, but without success."

"He will be here to-night."

"In what part of the house?"

"In the baroness's box, I believe."

"That charming young woman with her is her daughter?"

"Yes."

"Indeed! then I congratulate you."

Morcerf smiled. "We will discuss that subject at some future time," said he. "But what think you of the music?"

"What music?"

"That which you have just heard."

"*Oh, it is admirable*, as the production of a human

composer, sung by a party of bipeds without feathers, as Diogenes styled mankind."

"Why, my dear count, it would seem that you can hear at pleasure the seven choirs of paradise."

"You are partly right; when I wish to listen to sounds so exquisitely attuned to melody as mortal ear never yet listened to, I go to sleep."

"Very well; you are wonderfully well situated for that. Sleep, my dear count, sleep; the opera was invented for no other end."

"No; in fact your orchestra is too noisy. To sleep after the manner I have mentioned, calm and silence are necessary; a certain preparation must also be called in aid."

"Ah! the famous hashish?"

"Precisely. Viscount, when you want to hear music come and take supper with me."

"I have already enjoyed that treat when breakfasting with you," said Morcerf.

"Do you mean at Rome?"

"I do."

"Ah, then, I suppose you heard Haydée's *guzla;* the poor exile frequently beguiles a weary hour in playing over the airs of her native land."

Morcerf did not pursue the subject, and Monte Cristo himself fell into a silent revery. The bell rang at this moment for the rising of the curtain.

"You will excuse my leaving you," said the count, turning in the direction of his box.

"What! Are you going?"

"Pray say everything that is kind to Comtesse G—— on the part of the vampire."

"And what message shall I convey to the baroness?"

"*That,* with her permission, I propose doing myself

the honor of paying my respects in the course of the evening."

The third act had now commenced; and during its progress the Comte de Morcerf, according to promise, made his appearance in the box of Madame Danglars. The Comte de Morcerf was not one of those persons whose aspect would create either interest or curiosity in a place of public amusement; his presence therefore was wholly unnoticed save by the occupants of the box in which he had just seated himself. The quick eye of Monte Cristo, however, marked his coming; and a slight smile passed over his lips. Haydée was entirely absorbed in the business of the stage; like all unsophisticated natures, she delighted in whatever addressed itself to the eye or ear.

The third act passed off as usual. Mademoiselles Noblet, Julie, and Leroux, executed the customary pirouettes; Robert duly challenged the Prince of Grenada; and the royal parent of the Princess Isabella, taking his daughter by the hand, swept round the stage with majestic strides, the better to display the rich folds of his velvet robe and mantle. After which the curtain again fell, and the spectators poured forth from the theatre into the lobbies and salon.

The count left his box and proceeded at once to that of Madame Danglars, who could scarcely restrain a cry of mingled pleasure and surprise. "Welcome, Monsieur the Count!" exclaimed she, as he entered. "I have been most anxious to see you, that I might repeat verbally those thanks writing can so ill express."

"Surely so trifling a circumstance cannot deserve a place in your remembrance. Believe me, Madame, I had entirely forgotten it."

"*But it is not so* easy to forget, Monsieur the Count,

that the next day you saved the life of my dear friend, Madame de Villefort, which was put in peril by those very horses."

"This time, at least, I cannot accept your flattering acknowledgments. Ali, my Nubian slave, had the good fortune to render to Madame de Villefort that eminent service."

"Was it Ali," asked the Comte de Morcerf, "who rescued my son from the hands of bandits?"

"No, Monsieur the Count," replied Monte Cristo, pressing with friendly warmth the hand held out to him by the general; "in this instance I may fairly and freely accept your thanks. But you have already tendered them, I have already received them; and in fact I am embarrassed by your continued gratitude. Do me the honor, Madame the Baroness, to present me to Mademoiselle your daughter."

"Oh, you are no stranger, — at least not by name," replied Madame Danglars; "and the last two or three days we have talked of nothing else but yourself. Eugénie," continued the baroness, turning towards her daughter, "M. le Comte de Monte Cristo."

The count bowed, while Mademoiselle Danglars returned a slight inclination of the head. "You have a charming young person with you to-night, Monsieur the Count," said Eugénie. "Is she your daughter?"

"No, indeed," said Monte Cristo, astonished at the coolness and freedom of the question. "She is an unfortunate Greek, of whom I am the guardian."

"And what is her name?"

"Haydée," replied Monte Cristo.

"A Greek?" murmured Comte de Morcerf.

"Yes, indeed, Count," said Madame Danglars; "and *tell me, did* you ever see at the court of Ali Tebelin,

whom you so gloriously served, a more admirable costume than we have there before our eyes?"

"Did I hear rightly, Monsieur the Count," said Monte Cristo, "that you served at Janina?"

"I was inspector-general of the pacha's troops," replied Morcerf; "and I seek not to conceal that I owe my fortune, such as it is, to the liberality of the illustrious Albanian chief."

"But look! pray look!" exclaimed Madame Danglars.

"Where?" stammered Morcerf.

"There, there!" said Monte Cristo, as, folding his arms around the count, he leaned with him over the front of the box, just as Haydée, whose eyes were occupied in examining the theatre in search of the count, perceived his pale features close to the countenance of Morcerf, whom he was holding in his arms. This sight produced on the astonished girl an effect similar to that of the fabulous head of Medusa. She bent forwards as though to assure herself of the reality of what she beheld, then uttering a faint cry, threw herself back in her seat. The sound that burst from the agitated Greek quickly reached the ear of the watchful Ali, who instantly opened the box-door to ascertain the cause.

"Bless me!" exclaimed Eugénie, "what has happened to your ward, Monsieur the Count? She seems taken suddenly ill!"

"Very probably!" answered the count. "But do not be alarmed on her account! Haydée's nervous system is delicately organized, and she is peculiarly susceptible to the odors even of flowers; there are some which cause her to faint if brought into her presence. However," continued Monte Cristo, drawing a small phial from his pocket, "I have an infallible remedy for such attacks." So saying, he bowed to the baroness and her daughter,

exchanged a parting shake of the hand with Debray and the count, and quitted the box. Upon his return to Haydée, he found her extremely pale and much agitated. As soon as she saw him she seized his hand. Monte Cristo noticed that the hands of the young girl were moist and cold.

"With whom was my Lord conversing a few minutes since?" asked she, in a trembling voice.

"With the Comte de Morcerf," answered Monte Cristo. "He tells me he served your illustrious father, and that he owes his fortune to him."

"Ah, the scoundrel!" exclaimed Haydée; "it is he who sold my father to the Turks, and the fortune he boasts of was the price of his treachery! Did you not know that, my dear Lord?"

"Something of this I heard in Epirus," said Monte Cristo; "but the particulars are still unknown to me. You shall relate them to me, my child. They are no doubt both curious and interesting."

"Yes, yes! but let us go hence, I beseech you! I feel as though it would kill me to remain longer near that dreadful man." So saying, Haydée arose, and wrapping herself in her burnoose of white cashmere embroidered with pearls and coral, she hastily quitted the box at the moment when the curtain was rising upon the fourth act.

"Do you observe?" said the Comtesse G—— to Albert, who had returned to her side; "that man does nothing like other people. He listens most devoutly to the third act of 'Robert le Diable,' and leaves when the fourth begins."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE STOCKS.

Some days after this meeting, Albert de Morcerf visited the Count of Monte Cristo at his house in the Champs Élysées, which had already assumed that palace-like appearance which the count's princely fortune enabled him to give even to his most temporary residences. He came to renew the thanks of Madame Danglars which had been already conveyed to the count through the medium of a letter, signed "Baronne Danglars, née Hermine de Servieux." Albert was accompanied by Lucien Debray, who, joining in his friend's conversation, added some passing compliments, the source of which the count's talent for finesse easily enabled him to guess. He was convinced that Lucien's visit to him was to be attributed to a double feeling of curiosity, the larger half of which sentiment emanated from the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin. In short, Madame Danglars, not being able personally to examine in detail the domestic economy and household arrangements of a man who gave away horses worth thirty thousand livres, and who went to the opera with a Greek slave wearing diamonds to the amount of a million of money, had deputed those eyes, by which she was accustomed to see, to give her a faithful account of the mode of life of this incomprehensible individual. But the count did not appear to suspect there could be the slightest connection between Lucien's visit and the baroness's *curiosity.*

"You are in constant communication, then, with the Baron Danglars?" inquired the count of Albert de Morcerf.

"Yes, Count, you know what I told you."

"All remains the same, then, in that quarter?"

"It is more than ever a settled thing," said Lucien; and considering this remark was all that he was at that time called upon to make, he adjusted the glass to his eye, and biting the top of his gold-headed cane, began to make the tour of the room, examining the arms and the pictures.

"Ah!" said Monte Cristo, "I did not expect, after hearing what you said, that the affair would be so promptly concluded."

"Oh, things take their course without our assistance. While we are forgetting them, they are falling into their appointed order; and when again our attention is directed to them, we are surprised at the progress they have made towards the proposed end. My father and M. Danglars served together in Spain, — my father in the army, and M. Danglars in the commissariat department. It was there that my father, ruined by the revolution, and M. Danglars, who never had possessed any patrimony, both laid the foundations of their different fortunes."

"Yes," said Monte Cristo, "I think M. Danglars mentioned that in a visit which I paid him; and," continued he, casting a side-glance at Lucien, who was turning over the leaves of an album, "is Mademoiselle Eugénie pretty, — for I think I remember that to be her name?"

"Very pretty, or rather, very beautiful," replied Albert; "but of that style of beauty which I do not appreciate. I am an ungrateful fellow."

"You speak as if you were already her husband."

"Ah!" returned Albert, in his turn looking round to see what Lucien was doing.

"Really," said Monte Cristo, lowering his voice, "you do not appear to me to be very enthusiastic on the subject of this marriage."

"Mademoiselle Danglars is too rich for me," replied Morcerf; "and that frightens me."

"Bah!" exclaimed Monte Cristo, "that 's a fine reason to give! Are you not rich yourself?"

"My father's income is about fifty thousand livres per annum; and he will give me perhaps ten or twelve thousand when I marry."

"That perhaps might not be considered a large sum, in Paris especially," said the count; "but everything does not depend on wealth, and it is a fine thing to have a good name, and to occupy a high station in society. Your name is celebrated, your position magnificent; and then the Comte de Morcerf is a soldier, and it is pleasing to see the integrity of a Bayard united to the poverty of a Duguesclin, — disinterestedness is the brightest ray in which a noble sword can shine. As for me, I consider the union with Mademoiselle Danglars a most suitable one; she will enrich you, and you will ennoble her."

Albert shook his head, and looked thoughtful. "There is still something else," said he.

"I confess," observed Monte Cristo, "that I have some difficulty in comprehending your objection to a young lady who is both rich and beautiful."

"Oh!" said Morcerf, "this repugnance, if repugnance it may be called, is not all on my side."

"Whence can it arise, then? for you told me your father desired the marriage."

"My mother's is the dissenting voice; she has a clear and penetrating judgment, and does not smile on the pro-

posed union. I cannot account for it, but she seems to entertain some prejudice against the Danglars."

"Ah!" said the count, in a somewhat forced tone, "that may be easily explained; Madame la Comtesse de Morcerf, who is aristocracy and refinement itself, does not relish the idea of being allied by your marriage with one of ignoble birth, — that is natural enough."

"I do not know if that is her reason," said Albert; "but one thing I do know, that if this marriage be consummated it will render her quite miserable. There was to have been a meeting six weeks ago in order to talk over and settle the affair; but I had such a sudden attack of indisposition — "

"Real?" interrupted the count, smiling.

"Oh, real enough, from anxiety doubtless, — that they postponed the rendezvous for two months. There is no hurry, you know. I am not yet twenty-one, and Eugénie is only seventeen years of age; but the two months expire next week. It must be done. My dear count, you cannot imagine how my mind is harassed. Ah! how happy you are in being free!"

"Well! and why should not you be free too? What prevents you from being so?"

"Oh! it will be too great a disappointment to my father if I do not marry Mademoiselle Danglars."

"Marry her, then," said the count, with a significant shrug of the shoulders.

"Yes," replied Morcerf; "but that will plunge my mother into positive grief."

"Then do not marry her," said the count.

"Well, I shall see. I will try and think over what is the best thing to be done; you will give me your advice, will you ▾ ible extricate me from my unpleasant ather than give pain to my

excellent mother, I would run the risk of offending the count."

Monte Cristo turned away; he seemed moved by this last remark. "Ah!" said he to Debray, who had thrown himself into an easy-chair at the farthest extremity of the salon, and who held a pencil in his right hand and an account-book in his left, "what are you doing there? Are you making a sketch after Poussin?"

"No, no! I am doing something of a very opposite nature to painting. I am engaged with arithmetic."

"Arithmetic!"

"Yes; I am calculating — by the way, Morcerf, that indirectly concerns you — I am calculating what the house of Danglars must have gained by the last rise in Hayti stock; from 206 they have risen to 409 in three days, and the prudent banker had purchased largely at 206. He must have made three hundred thousand livres."

"That is not his best stroke," said Morcerf; "did he not gain a million in Spanish securities this last year?"

"My dear fellow," said Lucien, "here is the Count of Monte Cristo, who will say to you, as the Italians do, —

'Danáro e santità,
Metà della metà.'

When they tell me such things, I only shrug my shoulders and say nothing."

"But you were speaking of Hayti?" said Monte Cristo.

"Ah, Hayti! — that is quite another thing! Hayti is the *écarté* of French stock-jobbing. They may like *la bouillotte*, delight in whist, be enraptured with *le boston*, and yet grow tired of all; but they always come back to *écarté*, — that is the game *par excellence*. M. Danglars sold yesterday at 406, and pockets three hundred thousand livres. Had he but waited till to-day the stocks would

have fallen to 205, and instead of gaining three hundred thousand livres he would have lost twenty or twenty-five thousand."

"And why is this sudden fall from 409 to 205?" asked Monte Cristo. "I beg pardon, but I am profoundly ignorant of all these stock-jobbing intrigues."

"Because," said Albert, laughing, "one piece of news follows another, and there is often great dissimilarity between them."

"Ah," said the count, "I see that M. Danglars is accustomed to play at gaining or losing three hundred thousand livres in a day; he must be enormously rich."

"It is not he who plays," exclaimed Lucien, "it is Madame Danglars; she is indeed daring."

"But you who are a reasonable being, Lucien, and who know how little dependence is to be placed on the news, since you are at the fountain-head, surely you ought to prevent it," said Morcerf, with a smile.

"How can I if her husband fails in controlling her?" asked Lucien; "you know the character of the baroness, — no one has any influence with her, and she does precisely what she pleases."

"Ah, if I were in your place —" said Albert.

"Well?"

"I would reform her; it would be rendering a service to her future son-in-law."

"How would you set about it?"

"Ah, that would be easy enough, — I would give her a lesson."

"A lesson?"

"Yes. Your position as secretary to the minister renders your authority great on the subject of political news; you never open your mouth but the stock-brokers immediately stenograph your words. Cause her to lose one hun-

dred thousand livres suddenly, and that will teach her prudence."

"I do not understand," stammered Lucien.

"It is very clear, notwithstanding," replied the young man, with a *naïveté* totally free from all affectation; "announce to her some fine morning an unheard-of piece of intelligence, — some telegraphic despatch, of which you alone are in possession; for instance, that Henry IV. was seen yesterday at the house of Gabrielle. That will cause the funds to rise; she will lay her plans accordingly, and she will certainly lose when Beauchamp announces the following day in his journal, 'The report which has been circulated, stating the king to have been seen yesterday at Gabrielle's house, is totally without foundation. We can positively assert that his Majesty did not quit the Pont Neuf.'"

Lucien half smiled. Monte Cristo, although apparently indifferent, had not lost one word of this conversation, and his penetrating eye had even read a hidden secret in the embarrassed manner of the secretary. This embarrassment had completely escaped Albert, but it caused Lucien to shorten his visit; he was evidently ill at ease. The count, in taking leave of him, said something in a low voice to which he answered, "Willingly, Monsieur the Count; I accept your proposal." The count returned to young Morcerf.

"Do you not think, on reflection," said he to him, "that you have done wrong in thus speaking of your mother-in-law in the presence of M. Debray?"

"Monsieur the Count," said Morcerf, "I beg of you not to apply that title so prematurely."

"Now, speaking without any exaggeration, is your mother really so very much averse to this marriage?"

"So much so that the baroness very rarely comes to the

house; and my mother has not, I think, visited Madame Danglars twice in her whole life."

"Then," said the count, "I am emboldened to speak openly to you. M. Danglars is my banker; M. de Villefort has overwhelmed me with politeness in return for a service which a casual piece of good fortune enabled me to render him. I predict from all this an avalanche of dinners and routs. Now, in order to appear not to expect such a proceeding, and also to be beforehand with them, if you like it, I have thought of inviting Monsieur and Madame Danglars, and Monsieur and Madame de Villefort, to my country-house at Auteuil. If I were to invite you and the Comte and Comtesse de Morcerf to this dinner, it would give it the air of a matrimonial rendezvous, or at least Madame de Morcerf would look upon the affair in that light, especially if M. le Baron Danglars did me the honor to bring his daughter. In that case your mother would hold me in aversion, and I do not at all wish that; on the contrary, — and tell it to her as often as there is opportunity, — I desire to occupy a prominent place in her esteem."

"Indeed, Count," said Morcerf, "I thank you sincerely for having used so much candor towards me, and I gratefully accept the exclusion which you propose to me. You say you desire my mother's good opinion; I assure you it is already yours to a very unusual degree."

"Do you think so?" inquired Monte Cristo, with interest.

"Oh, I am sure of it; we talked of you an hour after you left us the other day. But to return to what we were saying. If my mother could know of this consideration on your part — and I will venture to tell her — I am sure that she will be most grateful to you; it is true that my father will be equally angry."

The count laughed. "Well," said he to Morcerf, "but I think your father will not be the only angry one; Monsieur and Madame Danglars will think me a very ill-mannered person. They know that I am intimate with you,—that you are, in fact, one of the oldest of my Parisian acquaintances, and they will not find you at my house; they will certainly ask me why I did not invite you. Be sure to provide yourself with some previous engagement which shall have a semblance of probability, and communicate the fact to me by a line in writing. You know that with bankers nothing but a written document will be valid."

"I will do better than that," said Albert; "my mother is wishing to go to the seaside,—what day is fixed for your dinner?"

"Saturday."

"This is Tuesday,—well, to-morrow evening we leave, and the day after we shall be at Tréport. Really, Monsieur the Count, you are a charming person to set people at their ease."

"Indeed, you give me more credit than I deserve; I only wish to do what will be agreeable to you, that is all."

"When shall you send your invitations?"

"This very day."

"Well, I will immediately call on M. Danglars, and tell him that my mother and myself leave Paris to-morrow. I have not seen you, consequently I know nothing of your dinner."

"How foolish you are! Have you forgotten that M. Debray has just seen you at my house?"

"Ah, true!"

"On the contrary, I have seen you, and invited you without any ceremony, when you instantly answered that it would be impossible for you to be among the number of my guests, as you were going to Tréport."

"Well, then, that is settled; but you will come and call on my mother before to-morrow?"

"Before to-morrow? That will be a difficult matter to arrange; besides, I should be in the way of all the preparations for departure."

"Very well! do something better than that. You were only a charming man before, but if you accede to my proposal, you will be adorable."

"What must I do to attain such a height?"

"You are to-day free as air; come and dine with me. We shall be a small party, — only yourself, my mother, and I. You have scarcely seen my mother; you will have an opportunity of observing her more closely. She is a remarkable woman, and I only regret that there does not exist another who resembles her, about twenty years younger; in that case, I assure you, there would very soon be a Comtesse and Vicomtesse de Morcerf. As to my father, you will not see him; he is officially engaged, and dines with Monsieur the Grand Referendary. We will talk over our travels; and you, who have seen the whole world, will relate your adventures. You shall tell us the history of the beautiful Greek who was with you the other night at the opera, and whom you call your slave, and yet treat like a princess. We will talk Italian and Spanish. Come, accept my invitation, and my mother will thank you."

"A thousand thanks," said the count; "your invitation is most gracious, and I regret exceedingly that it is not in my power to accept it. I am not so much at liberty as you suppose; on the contrary, I have a most important engagement."

"Ah, take care! you were teaching me just now how in case of an invitation to dinner one might creditably make an excuse a pre-engagement.

I am not a banker, like M. Danglars, but I am quite as incredulous as he is."

"I am going to give you a proof," replied the count; and he rang the bell.

"Humph!" said Morcerf, "this is the second time you have refused to dine with my mother; it is evident you wish to avoid her."

Monte Cristo started. "Oh, you do not mean that!" said he; "besides, here comes the confirmation of my assertion." Baptistin entered and remained standing at the door. "I had no previous knowledge of your visit, had I?"

"Indeed, you are such an extraordinary person that I would not answer for it."

"At all events, I could not guess that you would invite me to dinner?"

"Probably not."

"Well, listen; Baptistin, what did I tell you this morning when I called you into my laboratory?"

"To close the door against visitors as soon as the clock struck five," replied the valet.

"What then?"

"Ah, Monsieur the Count —" said Albert.

"No, no, I wish to do away with that mysterious reputation that you have given me, my dear viscount; it is tiresome to be always acting Manfred. I wish my life to be free and open. Go on, Baptistin."

"Then to admit no one except M. le Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti and his son."

"You hear: Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti, — a man who ranks among the most ancient nobility of Italy, whose name Dante has celebrated in the tenth canto of 'The Inferno;' you remember it, do you not? Then there is son, a charming young man about your own age, Vis-

count, bearing the same title as yourself, and who is making his *entrée* into the Parisian world, aided by his father's millions. The major will bring his son with him this evening, the *contino*, as we say in Italy; he confides him to my care. If he prove himself worthy of it, I will do what I can to advance his interests; you will assist me, will you not?"

"Most undoubtedly! This Major Cavalcanti is an old friend of yours, then?"

"By no means. He is a worthy nobleman, very polite, modest, and agreeable, such as may be found constantly in Italy, descendants of very ancient families. I have met him several times at Florence, Bologna, and Lucca, and he has now communicated to me the fact of his arrival in this place. The acquaintances one makes in travelling have a sort of claim on one. They everywhere expect to receive the same attention which you once paid them by chance; as though the civilities of a passing hour were likely to awaken any lasting interest in favor of the man in whose society you may happen to be thrown in the course of your journey. This good Major Cavalcanti has come to take a second view of Paris, which he has seen only in passing through in the time of the empire, when he was on his way to Moscow. I shall give him a good dinner; he will confide his son to my care; I will promise to watch over him. I shall let him follow in whatever path his folly may lead him; and then I shall have done my part."

"Certainly; I see you are a precious mentor," said Albert. "Good-by, then; we shall return on Sunday. By the way, I have received news of Franz."

"Have you? Is he still amusing himself in Italy?"

"I believe so; however, he regrets your absence extremely. He says you were the sun of Rome, and that

without you all appears dark and cloudy; I do not know if he does not even go so far as to say that it rains."

"His opinion of me is altered for the better, then?"

"No, he still persists in looking upon you as the most incomprehensible and mysterious of beings."

"He is a charming young man," said Monte Cristo; "and I felt a lively interest in him the very first evening when I learned that he was in search of a supper, and prevailed upon him to accept a portion of mine. He is, I think, the son of General d'Épinay?"

"He is."

"The same who was so shamefully assassinated in 1815?"

"By the Bonapartists."

"Yes! really I like him extremely; is there not also a matrimonial engagement contemplated for him?"

"Yes, he is to marry Mademoiselle de Villefort."

"Indeed!"

"Just as I am to marry Mademoiselle Danglars," said Albert, laughing.

"You smile!"

"Yes."

"Why do you do so?"

"I smile because there appears to me to be about as much inclination for the consummation of the engagement in question as there is for my own. But really, my dear count, we are talking of women as they talk of men; it is unpardonable!" Albert rose.

"Are you going?"

"Really, that is very good in you! Two hours have I been boring you to death with my company, and then you with the greatest politeness, ask me if I am going! Indeed, Count, you are the most polished man in the world! And your servants, too, how very well behaved

they are. There is quite a style about them, — M. Baptistin especially; I could never get such a man as that. My servants seem to imitate those you sometimes see in a play, who because they have only a word or two to say acquit themselves in the most awkward manner possible. So if you part with M. Baptistin, give me the refusal of him."

"Agreed, Viscount."

"That is not all. Give my compliments to your illustrious visitor, Cavalcante of the Cavalcanti; and if by any chance he should be wishing to establish his son, find him a wife very rich, very noble, on her mother's side at least, and a baroness in right of her father, in that I will help you."

"Oh, oh! you will do as much as that, will you?"

"Yes."

"Well, really, nothing is certain in this world."

"Oh, Count, what a service you might render me! I should like you a hundred times better if by your intervention I could manage to remain a bachelor, even were it only for ten years."

"Nothing is impossible," gravely replied Monte Cristo; and taking leave of Albert, he returned into the house and struck the gong three times. Bertuccio appeared.

"M. Bertuccio, you understand that I intend entertaining company on Saturday at Auteuil." Bertuccio slightly started. "I shall require your services to see that all be properly arranged. It is a beautiful house, or at all events may be made so."

"There must be a good deal done before it can deserve that title, Monsieur the Count, for the tapestried hangings are very old."

"Let them all be taken away and changed, then, with the exception of the sleeping-chamber which is hung with

red damask; you will leave that exactly as it is." Bertuccio bowed. "You will not touch the garden either. As to the yard, you may do what you please with it; I should prefer that being altered beyond all recognition."

"I will do everything in my power to carry out your wishes, Monsieur the Count. I should be glad, however, to receive your Excellency's commands concerning the dinner."

"Really, my dear M. Bertuccio," said the count, "since you have been in Paris you have become quite nervous, and apparently out of your element; you no longer seem to understand me."

"But surely your Excellency will be so good as to inform me whom you are expecting to receive?"

"I do not yet know myself; neither is it necessary that you should know. Lucullus dines with Lucullus; that is quite sufficient." Bertuccio bowed and left the room.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MAJOR CAVALCANTI.

THE count and Baptistin had told the truth when they announced to Morcerf the proposed visit of the major, which had served Monte Cristo as a pretext for declining the invitation which he had received from Albert. Seven o'clock had just struck; and M. Bertuccio, according to the command which had been given him, had two hours before left for Auteuil, when a *fiacre* stopped at the door of the hotel, and after depositing its occupant at the gate, immediately hurried away as if ashamed of its employment. The individual who alighted from the vehicle was about fifty-two years of age, dressed in one of those green surtouts ornamented with black frogs, which have so long maintained their popularity all over Europe. He wore trousers of blue cloth, boots tolerably clean but not of the brightest polish and a little too thick in the soles, buckskin gloves, a hat somewhat resembling in shape those usually worn by the gendarmes, and a black cravat striped with white, which, if the proprietor had not worn it of his own free will, might have passed for a halter. Such was the picturesque costume of the person who rang at the gate and demanded if it was not No. 30 in the Avenue de Champs-Élysées that M. le Comte de Monte Cristo inhabited, and who, being answered by the porter in the affirmative, [illegible] him, and began

The small and angular head of the individual in question, his white hair and thick gray mustache, caused him to be easily recognized by Baptistin, who had received an exact description of the expected visitor, and who was awaiting him in the hall. Therefore, scarcely had the stranger time to pronounce his name before the count was apprised of his arrival. He was ushered into a simple and elegant drawing-room, and the count rose to meet him with a smiling air. "Ah, my dear sir, you are most welcome; I was expecting you."

"Indeed," said the Italian, "your Excellency expected me?"

"Yes; I had been notified that I should see you to-day at seven o'clock."

"Then you have received full information concerning my arrival?"

"Decidedly."

"Ah, so much the better; I feared this little precaution might have been forgotten."

"What precaution?"

"That of informing you beforehand of my coming."

"Oh, no, it has not."

"But you are sure you are not mistaken?"

"I am sure of it."

"It really was I whom your Excellency expected at seven o'clock this evening?"

"I will prove it to you beyond a doubt."

"Oh, no; never mind that," said the Italian; "it is not worth the trouble."

"Yes, yes," said Monte Cristo. His visitor appeared slightly uneasy. "Let me see," said the count; "are you not M. le Marquis Bartolomeo Cavalcanti?"

"Bartolomeo Cavalcanti," joyfully replied the Italian; "yes, I am really he."

"Ex-major in the Austrian service?"

"Was I a major?" timidly asked the old soldier.

"Yes," said Monte Cristo, "you were a major; that is the title the French give to the post which you filled in Italy."

"Very good," said the major; "I do not demand more, you understand —"

"Your visit here to-day is not of your own suggestion, is it?" said Monte Cristo.

"No, certainly not."

"You were sent by some other person?"

"Yes."

"By the excellent Abbé Busoni?"

"Exactly so," said the delighted major.

"And you have a letter?"

"Yes, there it is."

"Give it me, then;" and Monte Cristo took the letter, which he opened and read. The major looked at the count with his large staring eyes, and then took a survey of the apartment; but his gaze almost immediately reverted to the proprietor of the room. "Yes, yes, I see. 'Major Cavalcanti, a worthy patrician of Lucca, a descendant of the Cavalcanti, of Florence,'" continued Monte Cristo, reading aloud, "'possessing an income of half a million.'" Monte Cristo raised his eyes from the paper and bowed. "Half a million," said he, "magnificent!"

"Half a million, is it!" said the major.

"Yes, in so many words; and it must be so, for the abbé knows correctly the amount of all the largest fortunes in Europe."

"Be it half a million, then; but on my word of honor I had no idea that it was so much."

"Because you are robbed by your steward. You must make [illegible]tion in that quarter."

"You have opened my eyes," said the Italian, gravely; "I will show the gentleman the door."

Monte Cristo resumed the perusal of the letter: "'And who only needs one thing more to make him happy.'"

"Yes, indeed; but one!" said the major, with a sigh.

"'Which is to recover a lost and adored son.'"

"A lost and adored son!"

"'Stolen away in his infancy, either by an enemy of his noble family or by the gypsies.'"

"At the age of five years!" said the major, with a deep sigh and raising his eyes to heaven.

"Unhappy father!" said Monte Cristo. The count continued: "'I have given him renewed life and hope in the assurance that you have the power of restoring the son whom he has vainly sought for fifteen years.'" The major looked at the count with an indescribable expression of anxiety. "I have the power of so doing," said Monte Cristo.

The major recovered his self-possession. "Ah, ah!" said he, "the letter was true then to the end?"

"Did you doubt it, M. Bartolomeo?"

"No, indeed; certainly not. A good man, a man holding a religious office, as does the Abbé Busoni, could not condescend to deceive or play off a joke; but your Excellency has not read all."

"Ah, true!" said Monte Cristo; "there is a postscript."

"Yes, yes," repeated the major; "yes — there — is — a - - postscript."

"'In order to save Major Cavalcanti the trouble of drawing on his banker, I send him a draft for two thousand livres to defray his travelling expenses, and credit on you for the further sum of forty-eight thousand, which you still owe me.'"

The major awaited the conclusion of the postscript apparently with great anxiety.

"Very good," said the count.

"He said 'very good,'" muttered the major; "then — Monsieur —" replied he.

"Then what?" asked Monte Cristo.

"Then the postscript —"

"Well! what of the postscript?"

"Then the postscript is as favorably received by you as the rest of the letter?"

"Certainly; the Abbé Busoni and myself have a small account open between us. I do not remember if it is exactly forty-eight thousand livres which I am still owing him; but I dare say we shall not dispute the difference. You attached great importance, then, to this postscript, my dear M. Cavalcanti?"

"I must explain to you," said the major, "that fully confiding in the signature of the Abbé Busoni, I had not provided myself with any other funds; so that if this resource had failed me, I should have found myself very unpleasantly situated in Paris."

"Is it possible that a man of your standing should be embarrassed anywhere?" said Monte Cristo.

"Why, really, I know no one," said the major.

"But then you yourself are known to others?"

"Yes, I am known, so that —"

"Proceed, my dear M. Cavalcanti."

"So that you will remit to me these forty-eight thousand livres?"

"Certainly; at your first request." The major's eyes dilated with pleasing astonishment. "But sit down," said Monte Cristo; "really I do not know what I have been thinking of, — I have kept you standing for the last *quarter of* an hour."

"Don't mention it."

The major drew an armchair towards him, and proceeded to seat himself.

"Now," said the count, "will you take something, — a glass of port, sherry, or wine of Alicante?"

"Wine of Alicante, if you please; it is my favorite wine."

"I have some which is excellent. You will take a biscuit with it, will you not?"

"Yes, I will take a biscuit, as you are so obliging."

Monte Cristo rang; Baptistin appeared. The count advanced to meet him. "Well?" said he, in a low voice.

"The young man is here," said the *valet de chambre*, in the same tone.

"Into what room did you take him?"

"Into the blue drawing-room, according to your Excellency's orders."

"That's right; now bring the wine of Alicante and some biscuits."

Baptistin left the room.

"Really," said the major, "I am quite ashamed of the trouble I am giving you."

"Pray don't mention such a thing," said the count.

Baptistin re-entered with glasses, wine, and biscuits. The count filled one glass, but in the other he only poured a few drops of the ruby-colored liquid. The bottle was covered with spider's webs, and all the other signs which indicate the age of wine more truly than do wrinkles on the face of a man. The major made a wise choice; he took the full glass and a biscuit. The count told Baptistin to leave the plate within reach of his guest, who began by sipping the Alicante with an expression of great satisfaction, and then delicately steeped his biscuit in the wine.

"*So, sir, you inhabited* Lucca, did you? You were

rich, noble, held in great esteem, — had all that could render a man happy?"

"All," said the major, hastily swallowing his biscuit, "positively all."

"And yet there was one thing wanting in order to complete your happiness?"

"Only one thing," said the Italian.

"And that one thing your lost child!"

"Ah," said the major, taking a second biscuit, "that consummation of my happiness was indeed wanting." The worthy major raised his eyes to heaven and sighed.

"Let me hear, then," said the count, "who this deeply-regretted son was, — for I always understood you were a bachelor."

"That was the general opinion, sir," said the major; "and I —"

"Yes," replied the count, "and you confirmed the report. A youthful indiscretion, I suppose, which you were anxious to conceal from the world at large?"

The major recovered himself, and resumed his usual calm manner, at the same time casting his eyes down, either to give himself time to compose his countenance, or to assist his imagination, all the while giving an under-look at the count, the protracted smile on whose lips still announced the same polite curiosity.

"Yes," said the major; "I did wish this fault to be hidden from every eye."

"Not on your own account, surely," replied Monte Cristo; "for a man is above all these things?"

"Oh, no, certainly not on my own account," said the major, with a smile, and a shake of the head.

"But for the sake of the mother?" said the count.

"Yes, for the mother's sake, — his poor mother!" cried the major, taking a third biscuit.

"Take some more wine, my dear Cavalcanti," said the count, pouring out for him a second glass of Alicante; "your emotion has quite overcome you."

"His poor mother!" murmured the major, trying to ascertain whether the will was powerful enough to act on the lachrymal gland, so as to moisten the corner of his eye with a false tear.

"She belonged to one of the first families in Italy, I think, did she not?"

"She was of a noble family of Fiesole, Monsieur the Count."

"And her name was —"

"Do you desire to know her name?"

"Oh," said Monte Cristo, "it would be quite superfluous for you to tell me, for I already know it."

"Monsieur the Count knows everything," said the Italian, bowing.

"Oliva Corsinari, was it not?"

"Oliva Corsinari!"

"A marchioness?"

"A marchioness!"

"And you married her at last, notwithstanding the opposition of her family?"

"Yes, I did so."

"And you have doubtless brought all your papers with you?" said Monte Cristo.

"What papers?"

"The certificate of your marriage with Oliva Corsinari, and the register of your child's birth."

"The register of my child's birth?"

"The register of the birth of Andrea Cavalcanti, — of your son; is not his name Andrea?"

"I believe so," said the major.

"What! you believe so?"

"I dare not positively assert it, as he has been lost for so long a time."

"That is true," said Monte Cristo. "Then you have all the documents with you?"

"Monsieur the Count, I regret to say that not knowing it was necessary to come provided with these papers, I neglected to bring them with me."

"That is unfortunate," returned Monte Cristo.

"Were they, then, so necessary?"

"They were indispensable."

The major passed his hand across his brow. "Ah, *per Bacco*, indispensable!"

"Certainly they were; if any one here should suggest some doubt as to the validity of your marriage or the legitimacy of your child!"

"True," said the major; "there might be doubts."

"In that case your son would be very unpleasantly situated."

"It would be fatal to his interests."

"It might cause him to fail in some desirable matrimonial speculation."

"*O peccato!*"

"You must know that in France they are very particular on these points; it is not sufficient, as in Italy, to go to the priest and say, 'We love each other, and want you to marry us.' Marriage is a civil affair in France, and in order to marry in an orthodox manner you must have papers which undeniably establish your identity."

"That is the misfortune! I have not these necessary papers."

"Fortunately, I have them," said Monte Cristo.

"You?"

"Yes."

"You have them?"

"I have them."

"Ah, indeed!" said the major, who seeing the object of his journey frustrated by the absence of the papers, feared also that his forgetfulness might give rise to some difficulty concerning the forty-eight thousand livres, — "ah, indeed, that is a fortunate circumstance; yes, that really is lucky, for it never occurred to me to bring them."

"I do not at all wonder at it. One cannot think of everything; but happily the Abbé Busoni thought for you."

"He is an excellent person!"

"He is extremely prudent and thoughtful."

"He is an admirable man," said the major; "and he sent them to you?"

"Here they are."

The major clasped his hands in token of admiration.

"You married Oliva Corsinari in the church of San Paolo del Monte Cattini; here is the priest's certificate."

"Yes, indeed; there it is," said the Italian, looking on with astonishment.

"And here is Andrea Cavalcanti's baptismal register, given by the curé of Saravezza."

"All quite correct."

"Take these documents, then; they do not concern me. You will give them to your son, who will of course take great care of them."

"I should think so, indeed! If he were to lose them —"

"Well, and if he were to lose them?" said Monte Cristo.

"In that case," replied the major, "it would be necessary to write for duplicates; and it would be some time before they could be obtained."

"It would be a difficult matter to arrange," said Monte Cristo.

"Almost an impossibility," replied the major.

"I am very glad to see that you understand the value of these papers."

"I regard them as invaluable."

"Now," said Monte Cristo, "as to the mother of the young man —"

"As to the mother of the young man —" repeated the Italian, with anxiety.

"As regards the Marquise Corsinari —"

"Really," said the major, before whom difficulties seemed to spring up, "will she be wanted in any way?"

"No, sir," replied Monte Cristo; "besides, has she not —"

"Yes, yes," said the major; "she has —"

"Paid the last debt of nature?"

"Alas! yes," returned the Italian.

"I knew that," said Monte Cristo; "she has been dead these ten years."

"And I am still mourning her loss!" exclaimed the major, drawing from his pocket a checked handkerchief, and alternately wiping first the right and then the left eye.

"What would you have?" said Monte Cristo; "we are all mortal. Now you understand, my dear M. Cavalcanti, that it is useless for you to tell people in France that you have been separated from your son for fifteen years. Stories of gypsies who steal children are not at all in vogue in this part of the world, and would not be believed. You sent him for his education to a college in one of the provinces, and now you wish him to complete his education in the Parisian world. That is the reason which has induced you to leave Via Reggio, where you have lived since the death of your wife. That will be sufficient."

"You think so?"

"Certainly."

"Very well, then."

"If they should hear of the separation —"

"Ah, yes; what could I say?"

"That an unfaithful tutor, bought over by the enemies of your family —"

"By the Corsinari?"

"Precisely. Had stolen away this child, in order that your name might become extinct."

"That will do well, since he is an only son."

"Well, now that all is arranged; now that these newly-awakened remembrances cannot be easily forgotten, — you have doubtless already guessed that I was preparing a surprise for you?"

"An agreeable one?" asked the Italian.

"Ah, I see the eye of a father is no more to be deceived than his heart."

"Hum!" said the major.

"Some one has told you the secret; or perhaps you guessed that he was here."

"That who was here?"

"Your child — your son — your Andrea!"

"I did guess it," replied the major, with the greatest *sang-froid* possible. "Then he is here?"

"He is," said Monte Cristo; "when the *valet de chambre* came in just now he told me of his arrival."

"Ah! very well! very well!" said the major, clutching the buttons of his coat at each exclamation which he made.

"My dear sir," said Monte Cristo, "I understand all your emotion; you must have time to recover yourself. I will in the mean time go and prepare the young man for this much-desired interview, for I presume that he is not less impatient for it than yourself."

"I should imagine so," said Cavalcanti.

"Well, in a quarter of an hour he shall be with you."

"You will bring him, then? You carry your goodness so far as even to present him to me yourself?"

"No; I do not wish to come between a father and son. Your interview will be private. But do not be uneasy; even if the powerful voice of nature should be silent, you cannot well mistake him. He will enter by this door. He is a fine young man of fair complexion, — a little too fair, perhaps, — and pleasing manners; but you will see and judge for yourself."

"By the way," said the major, "you know I have only the two thousand livres which the Abbé Busoni sent me; this sum I have expended on travelling expenses, and — "

"And you want money; that is a matter of course, my dear M. Cavalcanti. Well, here are eight thousand livres on account."

The major's eyes sparkled brilliantly.

"It is forty thousand livres which I now owe you," said Monte Cristo.

"Does your Excellency wish for a receipt?" said the major, at the same time slipping the money into the inner pocket of his coat.

"For what?" said the count.

"I thought you might want it to show the Abbé Busoni."

"Well, when you receive the remaining forty thousand you shall give me a receipt in full. Between honest men such precautions are unnecessary."

"Ah! yes, that is so," said the major; "between honest men."

"One word more," said Monte Cristo.

"Say on."

"You will permit me to make a suggestion?"

"Certainly; I request it."

"Then I should advise you to leave off wearing that style of dress."

"Indeed!" said the major, regarding himself with an air of satisfaction.

"Yes. It may be worn at Via Reggio; but that costume, however elegant in itself, has long been out of fashion in Paris."

"That 's unfortunate."

"Oh, if you really are attached to your old mode of dress, you can easily resume it when you leave Paris."

"But what shall I wear?"

"What you have in your trunks."

"In my trunks? I have but one portmanteau."

"I dare say you have nothing else with you. What is the use of boring one's self with so many things? Besides, an old soldier always likes to march with as little baggage as possible."

"That is just why —"

"But you are a man of foresight and prudence, therefore you sent your luggage on before you. It has arrived at the Hôtel des Princes, Rue Richelieu. It is there you are to take up your quarters."

"Then in these trunks —"

"I presume you have given orders to your *valet de chambre* to put in all you are likely to need, — your plain clothes and your uniform. On grand occasions you must wear your uniform; that will look very well. Do not forget your crosses. They still laugh at them in France, and yet always wear them, for all that."

"Very well! very well!" said the major, who passed from rapture to rapture.

"Now," said Monte Cristo, "that you have fortified

yourself against all painful excitement, prepare yourself, my dear M. Cavalcanti, to meet your lost Andrea."

Saying which Monte Cristo bowed and disappeared behind the tapestry, leaving the major in an ecstasy of delight.

CHAPTER XIX.

ANDREA CAVALCANTI.

THE Count of Monte Cristo entered the adjoining room, which Baptistin had designated as the blue drawing-room, and found there a young man of graceful demeanor and elegant appearance, who had arrived in a *fiacre* about half an hour previously. Baptistin had not found any difficulty in recognizing the individual who presented himself at the door for admittance. He was certainly the tall young man with light hair, red beard, black eyes, and brilliant complexion, whom his master had so particularly described to him. When the count entered the room, the young man was carelessly stretched on a sofa, tapping his boot with the gold-headed cane which he held in his hand. On perceiving the count he rose quickly. "The Count of Monte Cristo, I believe?" said he.

"Yes, Monsieur; and I think I have the honor of addressing M. le Vicomte Andrea Cavalcanti?"

"Vicomte Andrea Cavalcanti," repeated the young man, accompanying his words with a bow.

"You are charged with a letter of introduction addressed to me, are you not?" said the count.

"I did not mention that, because the signature seemed to me so strange."

"'Sinbad the Sailor,' is it not?"

"Exactly so. Now, as I have never known any Sinbad, with the exception of the one celebrated in the 'Thousand and One Nights' —"

"Well! it is one of his descendants, and a great friend

of mine. He is a very rich Englishman, eccentric almost to insanity; and his real name is Lord Wilmore."

"Ah, indeed! then that explains everything," said Andrea; "that is extraordinary. He is, then, the same Englishman whom I met — at — yes, very well! Monsieur the Count, I am at your service."

"If what you say be true," replied the count, smiling, "perhaps you will be kind enough to give me some account of yourself and your family?"

"Certainly, I will do so," said the young man, with a readiness which proved the soundness of his memory. "I am, as you have said, the Vicomte Andrea Cavalcanti, son of Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti, — a descendant of the Cavalcanti whose names are inscribed in the Golden Book at Florence. Our family, although still rich (for my father's income amounts to half a million), has experienced many misfortunes, and I myself was at the age of five years taken away by the treachery of my tutor, so that for fifteen years I have not seen the author of my existence. Since I have arrived at years of discretion and become my own master, I have been constantly seeking him, but all in vain. At length I received this letter from your friend, which states that my father is in Paris, and authorizes me to address myself to you for information respecting him."

"Really, all you have related to me is exceedingly interesting," said Monte Cristo, observing the young man with a gloomy satisfaction; "and you have done well to conform in everything to the wishes of my friend Sinbad, for your father is indeed here and is seeking you."

The count, from the moment of his first entering the drawing-room, had not once lost sight of the expression of the young man's countenance. He had admired the assurance of his look and the firmness of his voice; but at

these words, so natural in themselves, "Your father is indeed here and is seeking you," young Andrea started, and exclaimed, "My father! is my father here?"

"Most undoubtedly," replied Monte Cristo; "your father, the Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti."

The expression of terror which for the moment had overspread the features of the young man disappeared, almost immediately. "Ah, yes! that is the name, certainly," he said; "Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti. And you really mean to say, Monsieur the Count, that my dear father is here?"

"Yes, Monsieur; and I can even add that I have only just left his company. The history which he related to me of his lost son touched me to the quick; indeed, his griefs, hopes, and fears on that subject might furnish material for a most touching and pathetic poem. At length he one day received a letter, stating that the parties who had deprived him of his son now offered to restore him, or at least to give notice where he might be found, on condition of receiving a large sum of money by way of ransom. Your father did not hesitate an instant, and the sum was sent to the frontier of Piedmont, with a passport signed for Italy. You were in the south of France, I think?"

"Yes," replied Andrea, with an embarrassed air, "I was in the south of France."

"A carriage was to await you at Nice?"

"Precisely so; and it conveyed me from Nice to Genoa, from Genoa to Turin, from Turin to Chambéry, from Chambéry to Pont de Beauvoisin, and from Pont de Beauvoisin to Paris"

"Indeed! then your father ought to have met with you on the road, for it is exactly the same route which he himself took; and that is how we have been able to trace your journey to this place."

"But," said Andrea, "if my father had met me, I doubt if he would have recognized me; I must be somewhat altered since he last saw me."

"Oh! the voice of nature," said Monte Cristo.

"True," said the young man, "I had not thought of the voice of nature."

"Now," replied Monte Cristo, "there is only one source of uneasiness left in your father's mind, which is this: he is anxious to know how you have been employed during your long absence from him; how you have been treated by your persecutors; and if they have conducted themselves towards you with all the deference due to your rank. Finally, he is anxious to see if you have been fortunate enough to escape the bad moral influence to which you have been exposed, and which is infinitely more to be dreaded than any physical suffering; he wishes to discover if the fine abilities with which nature had endowed you have been weakened by want of culture; and in short, whether you consider yourself capable of resuming and retaining in the world the high position to which your rank entitles you."

"Monsieur," stammered the young man, quite astounded, "I hope no false report—"

"As for myself, I first heard you spoken of by my friend Wilmore the philanthropist. I believe he found you in some unpleasant position, but do not know of what nature, for I did not ask; I am not inquisitive. Your misfortunes engaged his sympathies, so that you must have been interesting. He told me that he was anxious to restore you to the position which you had lost, and that he would seek your father until he found him. He did seek, and has found him apparently, since he is here now; and finally my friend apprised me of your coming, and gave me a few other instructions relative to your future for-

tune. I am quite aware that my friend Wilmore is an original, but he is sincere, and as rich as a gold mine; consequently, he may indulge his eccentricities without any fear of their ruining him, and I have promised to adhere to his instructions. Now, sir, pray do not be offended at the question I am about to put to you, as it comes in the way of my duty as your patron. I would wish to know if the misfortunes which have happened to you — misfortunes entirely beyond your control, and which in no degree diminish my regard for you — I would wish to know if they have not in some measure contributed to render you a stranger to the world in which your fortune and your name entitle you to make a conspicuous figure?"

"Monsieur," returned the young man, recovering his assurance as the count proceeded, "make your mind easy on this score. Those who took me from my father, and who always intended sooner or later to sell me again to him, as they have now done, calculated that in order to make the most of their bargain it would be politic to leave me in possession of all my personal and hereditary worth, and even to increase the value if possible. I have therefore received a very good education, and have been treated by these kidnappers very much as the slaves were treated in Asia Minor, whose masters made them grammarians, doctors, and philosophers, in order that they might fetch a higher price in the Roman market." Monte Cristo smiled with satisfaction. It appeared as if he had not expected so much from M. Andrea Cavalcanti. "Besides," continued the young man, "if there did appear some defect in education, or offence against the established forms of etiquette, I suppose they would be excused, in consideration of the misfortunes which accompanied my birth and followed me through my youth."

"Well," said Monte Cristo, in an indifferent tone, "you will do as you please, Viscount, for you are the master of your own actions, and are the person most concerned in the matter; but if I were you I would not divulge a word of these adventures. Your history is quite a romance; and the world, which delights in romances contained between two covers of yellow paper, strangely mistrusts those which are bound in living parchment, even though they be gilded like yourself. This is the kind of difficulty which I wished to represent to you, Monsieur the Viscount. You would hardly have recited to any one your touching history before it would go forth to the world, and be deemed unlikely and unnatural. You would be no longer a lost child found, but you would be looked upon as an upstart who had sprung up like a mushroom in the night. You might excite a little curiosity, but it is not every one who likes to be made the centre of observation and the subject of unpleasant remark."

"I agree with you, Monsieur the Count," said the young man, turning pale in spite of himself under the scrutinizing look of Monte Cristo; "such consequences would be extremely unpleasant."

"Nevertheless, you must not exaggerate the evil," said Monte Cristo, "or by endeavoring to avoid one fault you will fall into another. You must resolve upon one simple and single line of conduct; and for a man of your intelligence this plan is as easy as it is necessary. You must form honorable friendships, and by that means counteract the prejudice which may attach to the obscurity of your former life." Andrea visibly changed countenance. "I would offer myself as your surety and friendly adviser," said Monte Cristo, "did I not possess a moral distrust of my best friends, and a sort of inclination to lead

others to doubt them too; therefore, in departing from this rule, I should (as the actors say) be playing a part quite out of my line, and should therefore run the risk of being hissed, which would be an act of folly."

"However, Monsieur the Count," said Andrea, "in consideration of Lord Wilmore, by whom I was recommended to you —"

"Yes, certainly," interrupted Monte Cristo; "but Lord Wilmore did not omit to inform me, my dear M. Andrea, that the season of your youth was rather a stormy one. Ah!" said the count, watching Andrea's countenance, "I do not demand any confession from you; besides, it was to prevent your needing any one that your father was sent for from Lucca. You shall soon see him. He is a little stiff and pompous in his manner, and he is disfigured by his uniform; but when it becomes known that he is in the Austrian service, all that will be pardoned. We are not generally very severe with the Austrians. In short, you will find your father a very presentable person, I assure you."

"Ah, sir, you have given me confidence; it is so long since we were separated that I have not the least remembrance of him."

"And besides, you know that in the eyes of the world a large fortune covers all defects."

"My father, then, is really rich, Monsieur?"

"He is a millionnaire, — his income is five hundred thousand livres."

"Then," said the young man, with anxiety, "I shall be sure to be placed in an agreeable position."

"One of the most agreeable possible, my dear monsieur; he will allow you an income of fifty thousand livres per annum during the whole time of your stay in Paris."

"In that case I shall always remain here."

"You cannot control circumstances, my dear monsieur; 'man proposes, and God disposes.'"

Andrea sighed. "But," said he, "so long as I do remain in Paris, and no circumstance compels me to go away, do you mean to tell me that I may rely on receiving the sum you just now mentioned to me?"

"You may."

"Shall I receive it from my father?" asked Andrea, with some uneasiness.

"Yes, you will receive it from your father personally; but Lord Wilmore will be the security for the money. He has, at the request of your father, opened an account of five thousand livres a month at M. Danglars', which is one of the safest banks in Paris."

"And does my father mean to remain long in Paris?" asked Andrea.

"Only a few days," replied Monte Cristo. "His service does not allow him to absent himself more than two or three weeks at a time."

"Ah, my dear father!" exclaimed Andrea, evidently charmed with the idea of his speedy departure.

"Therefore," said Monte Cristo, feigning to mistake his meaning, — "therefore I will not for another instant retard the pleasure of your meeting. Are you prepared to embrace your worthy father?"

"I hope you do not doubt it."

"Go, then, into the drawing-room, my young friend, where you will find your father awaiting you."

Andrea made a low bow to the count, and entered the adjoining room. Monte Cristo watched him till he disappeared, and then touched a spring made to look like a picture, which in sliding partially from the frame discovered to view a small interstice, which was so cleverly contrived that it revealed all that was passing in the drawing-room

now occupied by Cavalcanti and Andrea. The young man closed the door behind him, and advanced towards the major, who had risen when he heard steps approaching him. "Ah! my dear father!" said Andrea, in a loud voice, in order that the count might hear him in the next room, "is it really you?"

"How do you do, my dear son?" said the major, gravely.

"After so many years of painful separation," said Andrea, in the same tone of voice, and glancing towards the door, "what a happiness it is to meet again!"

"Indeed it is, after so long a separation."

"Will you not embrace me, sir?" said Andrea.

"If you wish it, my son," said the major; and the two men embraced each other after the fashion of actors on the stage; that is to say, each rested his head on the other's shoulder.

"Then we are once more reunited?" said Andrea.

"Once more!" replied the major.

"Never more to be separated?"

"Why as to that, I think, my dear son, you must be by this time so accustomed to France as to look upon it almost as your own country."

"The fact is," said the young man, "that I should be exceedingly grieved to leave Paris."

"As for me, you must know I cannot possibly live out of Lucca; therefore I shall return to Italy as soon as I can."

"But before you leave France, my dear father, I hope you will put me in possession of the documents which will be necessary to prove my descent."

"Certainly, I am come expressly on that account; it has cost me so much trouble to find you — so that I might give them to you — that I have no wish to begin that search again; it would occupy all the few remaining years of my life."

"Where are these papers, then?"

"Here they are."

Andrea seized the certificate of his father's marriage and that of his own baptism; and after having opened them with all the eagerness which might be expected under the circumstances, he read them with a facility which proved that he was accustomed to similar documents, and with an expression which plainly denoted an unusual interest in the contents. When he had perused the documents, an indefinable expression of pleasure lighted up his countenance; and looking at the major with a most peculiar smile, he said in very excellent Tuscan, "Then there are no longer galleys in Italy?"

The major drew himself up to his full height. "Why? What do you mean by that question?"

"Since documents like these can be made with impunity. In France, my very dear father, for half as much as that they would send you to breathe the air of Toulon for five years."

"Will you be good enough to explain your meaning?" said the major, endeavoring to assume a majestic air.

"My dear M. Cavalcanti," said Andrea, taking the major by the arm in a confidential manner, "how much are you paid for being my father?" The major was about to speak, when Andrea continued in a low voice, "Nonsense! I am going to set you an example of confidence; they give me fifty thousand livres a year to be your son. Consequently, you can understand I shall never be disposed to deny that you are my father." The major looked anxiously around him. "Make yourself easy; we are quite alone," said Andrea. "Besides, we are conversing in Italian."

"Well, then," replied the major, "they paid me fifty thousand livres down."

"M. Cavalcanti," said Andrea, "do you believe in fairy tales?"

"I used not to do so; but I really feel now almost obliged to have faith in them."

"You have, then, had some proofs?"

The major drew from his pocket a handful of gold. "Palpable," said he, "as you perceive."

"You think, then, that I may rely on the count's promises?"

"Certainly I do."

"You are sure he will keep his word with me?"

"To the letter; but at the same time, remember we must continue to play our respective parts. I as a tender father —"

"And I as a dutiful son, as they choose that I shall be descended from you."

"Whom do you mean by they?"

"*Ma foi!* I can hardly tell, but I was alluding to those who wrote the letter; you received one, did you not?"

"Yes."

"From whom?"

"From a certain Abbé Busoni."

"Have you any knowledge of him?"

"No, I have never seen him."

"What did he say in the letter?"

"You will promise not to betray me?"

"Rest assured of that; you well know that our interests are the same."

"Then read for yourself;" and the major gave a letter into the young man's hand. Andrea read in a low voice: —

You are poor; a miserable old age awaits you. Would you like to become rich, or at least independent? Set out immedi-

ately for Paris, and demand of the Count of Monte Cristo, Avenue des Champs Élysées, No. 30, the son whom you had by the Marquise Corsinari, and who was taken from you at five years of age. This son is named Andrea Cavalcanti. In order that you may not doubt the kind intention of the writer of this letter, you will find enclosed an order for two thousand livres, payable in Florence, at the house of M. Gozzi; also a letter of introduction to M. le Comte de Monte Cristo, on whom I give you a draft for forty-eight thousand livres. Remember to go to the count May 26, at seven o'clock in the evening.

ABBÉ BUSONI.

"It is the same."

"What do you mean?" said the major.

"I mean that I received a letter almost to the same effect."

"You?"

"Yes."

"From the Abbé Busoni?"

"No."

"From whom, then?"

"From an Englishman, called Lord Wilmore, who takes the name of Sinbad the Sailor."

"And of whom you have no more knowledge than I of the Abbé Busoni."

"You are mistaken; there I am in advance of you."

"You have seen him, then?"

"Yes, once."

"Where?"

"Ah! that is just what I cannot tell you; if I did I should make you as wise as myself, which it is not my intention to do."

"And what did the letter contain?"

"Read it."

You are poor, and your future prospects are dark and gloomy. Do you wish for a name; should you like to be rich, and your own master?

"*Ma foi!*" said the young man; "was it possible there could be two answers to such a question?"

Take the post-chaise which you will find waiting at the Porte de Gênès, as you enter Nice; pass through Turin, Chambéry, and Pont de Beauvoisin. Go to the Count of Monte Cristo, Avenue des Champs Élysées, May 26, at seven o'clock in the evening, and demand of him your father. You are the son of the Marquis Cavalcanti and the Marquise Oliva Corsinari. The marquis will give you some papers which will certify this fact, and authorize you to appear under that name in the Parisian world. As to your rank, an annual income of fifty thousand livres will enable you to support it admirably. I enclose a draft for five thousand livres on M. Ferrea, banker at Nice, and also a letter of introduction to the Count of Monte Cristo, whom I have directed to supply all your wants.

SINBAD THE SAILOR.

"Humph!" said the major; "very good! You have seen the count, you say?"

"I have only just left him."

"And has he conformed to all which the letter specified?"

"He has."

"Do you understand it?"

"Not in the least."

"There is a dupe somewhere."

"At all events, it is neither you nor I."

"Certainly not."

"Well, then —"

"It is none of our business, you think?"

"Precisely; I was about to say so. Let us play the game to the end, and go it blind."

"Agreed; you will see that I shall properly sustain my part."

"I have not doubted it for a moment, my dear father."

Monte Cristo chose this moment for re-entering the drawing-room. On hearing the sound of his footsteps, the two men threw themselves in each other's arms; the count found them thus embracing.

"Well, Marquis," said Monte Cristo, "you appear to be in no way disappointed in the son whom your good fortune has restored to you."

"Ah, Monsieur the Count, I am overwhelmed with delight."

"And what are your feelings?" said Monte Cristo, turning to the young man.

"As for me, my heart is overflowing with happiness."

"Happy father! happy son!" said the count.

"There is only one thing which grieves me," observed the major, "and that is the necessity for my leaving Paris so soon."

"Ah! my dear M. Cavalcanti," said Monte Cristo, "I trust you will not leave before I have had the honor of presenting you to some of my friends."

"I am at your service, Monsieur," replied the major.

"Now, Monsieur," said Monte Cristo, addressing Andrea, "make your confession."

"To whom?"

"Why, to your father; tell him something of the state of your finances."

"Ah, the devil!" said Andrea, "you have touched upon a tender chord."

"Do you hear what he says, Major?"

"Certainly I do."

"But do you understand?"

"I do."

"Your son says he requires money."

"Well! what would you have me do?" said the major.

"You should furnish him with some, of course," replied Monte Cristo.

"I?"

"Yes, you!" said the count, at the same time advancing towards Andrea, and slipping a packet of bank-notes into the young man's hand.

"What is this?"

"It is from your father."

"From my father?"

"Yes; did you not tell him just now that you wanted money? Well, he deputes me to give you this."

"Am I to consider this as part of my income on account?"

"No; it is towards the expenses of your settling in Paris."

"Ah! how good my dear father is!"

"Silence!" said Monte Cristo; "he does not wish you to know that it comes from him."

"I fully appreciate his delicacy," said Andrea, cramming the notes hastily into his pocket.

"And now, gentlemen, I wish you good-night," said Monte Cristo.

"And when shall we have the honor of seeing you again, Monsieur the Count?" asked Cavalcanti.

"Ah, yes!" said Andrea, "when may we hope for that pleasure?"

"On Saturday, if you will — yes — let me see — Saturday. I am to dine at my country-house, at Auteuil, on that day, Rue la Fontaine, No. 28. Several persons are invited, and among others M. Danglars, your banker. I will introduce you to him; it will be necessary that

he should know you both in order to pay you your money."

"Full dress?" said the major, half-aloud.

"Oh, yes, certainly!" said the count; "uniform, cross, small-clothes."

"And how shall I be dressed?" demanded Andrea.

"Oh, very simply; black trousers, polished boots, white waistcoat, either a black or blue coat, and a long cravat. Go to Blin or Veronique for your dress. Baptistin will tell you where they live, if you do not know where to find them. The less pretension there is in your dress the better will be the effect, as you are a rich man. If you mean to buy any horses, get them of Devedeux; and if you purchase a phaeton, go to Baptiste for it."

"At what hour shall we come?" asked the young man.

"About half-past six."

"We will be with you at that time," said the major.

The two Cavalcanti bowed to the count, and left the house. Monte Cristo went to the window, and saw them crossing the street, arm-in-arm. "There go two miscreants!" said he. "It is a pity they are not really related!" Then, after an instant of gloomy reflection, "Come, I will go to see the Morrels!" said he; "I think that disgust is even more sickening than hatred."

CHAPTER XX.

THE TRYSTING-PLACE.

Our readers must now allow us to transport them again to the enclosure surrounding M. de Villefort's house, and behind the gate, half-screened from view by the large chestnut-trees, we shall find some persons of our acquaintance. This time Maximilian was the first to arrive. He was intently watching for a shadow to appear among the trees, and awaiting with anxiety the sound of a light step on the gravel walk. At length the long-desired sound was heard, and instead of one figure, as he had expected, he perceived that two were approaching him. The delay of Valentine had been occasioned by a visit from Madame Danglars and Eugénie, which had been prolonged beyond the time at which she was expected. Then, that she might not fail in her promise to Maximilian, she proposed to Mademoiselle Danglars that they should take a walk in the garden, being anxious to show that the delay, which was doubtless a cause of vexation to him, was not occasioned by any neglect on her part. The young man, with the intuitive perception of a lover, quickly understood the circumstances in which she was involuntarily placed; and he was comforted. Besides, although she avoided coming within speaking distance, Valentine arranged so that Maximilian could see her pass and repass; and each time she did so, she managed, unperceived by her companion, to cast an expressive look at the young man, which seemed to say, "Have patience! You see it

is not my fault." And Maximilian was patient, and employed himself in mentally contrasting the two girls, — one fair, with soft, languishing eyes, a figure gracefully bending like a weeping willow; the other a brunette, with a fierce and haughty expression, and as upright as a poplar. It is unnecessary to state that in the eyes of the young man, Valentine did not suffer by the contrast. At the end of about half an hour the ladies retired, and Maximilian understood that Mademoiselle Danglars's visit had at last come to a conclusion. In a few minutes Valentine re-entered the garden alone. For fear that any one should be observing her return, she walked slowly; and instead of immediately directing her steps towards the gate, she seated herself on a bank, and carefully looked around, to convince herself that she was not watched. Presently she rose and proceeded quickly to the gate.

"Good-evening, Valentine," said a voice.

"Good-evening, Maximilian; I have kept you waiting, but you saw the cause of my delay."

"Yes, I recognized Mademoiselle Danglars. I was not aware that you were so intimate with her."

"Who told you we were intimate, Maximilian?"

"No one, but you appeared to be so; from the manner in which you walked and talked together one would have thought you were two school-girls telling your secrets to each other."

"We were having a confidential conversation," returned Valentine. "She was owning to me her repugnance to the marriage with M. de Morcerf; and I on the other hand was confessing to her how wretched it made me to think of marrying M. d'Épinay."

"Dear Valentine!"

"That will account to you for the unreserved manner which you observed between me and Eugénie; it was

because in speaking of the man whom I cannot love, I thought of the man I love."

"Ah, how good you are in every way, Valentine! You possess a quality which can never belong to Mademoiselle Danglars! It is that indefinable charm which is to a woman what perfume is to the flower and flavor to the fruit; for the beauty of either is not the only quality we seek."

"It is your love which makes you look upon everything in that light."

"No, Valentine, I assure you. I was observing you both when you were walking in the garden, and on my honor, without at all wishing to depreciate the beauty of Mademoiselle Danglars, I cannot understand how any man can really love her."

"It is because, as you said, Maximilian, I was there; and my presence made you unjust."

"No; but tell me — it is a question of simple curiosity which was suggested by certain ideas passing in my mind relative to Mademoiselle Danglars — "

"Oh! very unjust ideas, I know without knowing what they are. When you sit in judgment on us poor women, we cannot expect indulgence."

"You cannot at least deny that you are very harsh judges of each other."

"If we are so, it is because we generally judge under the influence of excitement. But return to your question."

"Does Mademoiselle Danglars object to this marriage with M. de Morcerf on account of loving another?"

"I told you I was not on terms of strict intimacy with Eugénie."

"Yes; but girls tell each other secrets without being particularly intimate. Own, now, that you did question her on the subject. Ah! I see you are smiling."

"If you are already aware of the conversation that passed, the wooden partition which interposed between us and you has proved but a slight security."

"Come, what did she say?"

"She told me that she loved no one," said Valentine; "that she disliked the idea of being married; that she would infinitely prefer leading an independent and unfettered life; and that she almost wished her father might lose his fortune, that she might become an artist like her friend, Mademoiselle Louise d'Armilly."

"Ah, you see —"

"Well, what does that prove?" asked Valentine.

"Nothing," replied Maximilian, smiling.

"Then why do you smile?"

"Why, you yourself had your eyes fixed on me."

"Do you wish me to go?"

"Ah, no, no! but let us talk of you."

"True; we have scarcely ten minutes more to pass together."

"Good heavens!" said Maximilian, in consternation.

"Yes, Maximilian, you are right," said Valentine, in a tone of melancholy; "I am but a poor friend to you. What a life I cause you to lead, poor Maximilian, you who are formed for happiness! I bitterly reproach myself, I assure you."

"Well, what does it signify, Valentine, so long as I am satisfied, and feel that even this long and painful suspense is amply repaid by five minutes of your society, or two words from your mouth? And I have also a deep conviction that Heaven would not have created two hearts harmonizing as ours do, and united us to each other almost miraculously, at last to separate us."

"That is well said, and I thank you. Be hopeful for us both Maximilian: that will make me partly happy."

"What has happened, then, Valentine, that you leave me so soon?"

"I do not know. Madame de Villefort has sent to request my presence, as she has a communication to make on which a part of my fortune depends. Let them take my fortune, I am already too rich; and perhaps when they have taken it, they will leave me in peace and quietness. You would love me as much if I were poor, would you not, Maximilian?"

"Oh! I shall always love you. What should I care for either riches or poverty if my Valentine were near me and I felt certain that no one could deprive me of her? But do you not fear that this communication may relate to your marriage?"

"I do not think so."

"Meanwhile listen to me, Valentine, and fear nothing; for as long as I live I shall never love any one but you."

"You expect to reassure me in saying that, Maximilian?"

"Pardon me; you are right, — I was thoughtless. Well, I was about to tell you that I met M. de Morcerf the other day."

"Well?"

"M. Franz is his friend, you know."

"What then?"

"M. de Morcerf has received a letter from Franz, announcing his immediate return."

Valentine turned pale and leaned against the gate for support. "Can it really be true; and is that why Madame de Villefort has sent for me? No; the communication would not be likely to come from her."

"Why not?"

"Because — I scarcely know why — but it has appeared that Madame de Villefort secretly objects to the marriage, although she does not openly oppose it."

"Is it so? Then I feel as if I could adore Madame de Villefort."

"Do not be in such a hurry to do that," said Valentine, with a sad smile.

"If she objects to your marrying M. d'Épinay, she would be all the more likely to listen to any other proposition."

"Put no trust in that, Maximilian; Madame de Villefort finds no fault with suitors, she objects to marriage."

"Marriage! if she dislikes that so much, why did she ever marry herself?"

"You do not understand me, Maximilian. About a year ago, I talked of retiring to a convent; Madame de Villefort, in spite of all the remarks which she considered it her duty to make, secretly approved of the proposition. My father consented to it at her instigation; and it was only on account of my poor grandfather that I finally abandoned the project. You can form no idea of the expression of that old man's eye when he looks at me,—the only person in the world whom he loves, and I had almost said, by whom he is beloved in return. When he learned my resolution, I shall never forget the reproachful look which he cast on me, and the tears of utter despair which chased each other down his lifeless cheeks. Ah, Maximilian, I experienced at that moment such remorse for my intention that throwing myself at his feet, I exclaimed, 'Forgive me, pray forgive me, my dear grandfather; they may do what they will with me, I will never leave you.' When I had ceased speaking, he thankfully raised his eyes to heaven, but without uttering a word. Ah, Maximilian! I may have much to suffer, but I feel as if my grandfather's look at that moment would more than compensate for all."

"Dear Valentine, you are an angel; and I am sure I do not know how I have deserved, in sabring to the right

and left among the Bedouins, — unless indeed God has considered the fact that they are infidels, — I do not know how I have deserved that you should be sent to me. But tell me what interest Madame de Villefort can have in your remaining unmarried."

"Have I not told you that I am rich, Maximilian, too rich? I possess an income of about fifty thousand livres in right of my mother; my grandfather and my grandmother, the Marquis and Marquise de Saint-Méran, will leave me as much more; and M. Noirtier evidently intends making me his heir. My brother Édouard, who inherits nothing from his mother, will therefore be poor in comparison with me. Now, Madame de Villefort loves that child to adoration; and if I had taken the veil, all my fortune, passing to my father, — who would inherit from the marquis, the marchioness, and myself, — would go to his son."

"Ah! how strange it seems that such a young and beautiful woman should be so avaricious."

"It is not for herself that she is so, but for her son; and what you regard as a vice becomes almost a virtue when looked at in the light of maternal love."

"But could you not compromise matters, and give up a portion of your fortune to her son?"

"How could I make such a proposition, especially to a woman who always professes to be so entirely disinterested?"

"Valentine, I have always regarded our love in the light of something sacred. Consequently I have covered it with the veil of respect, and hid it in the inmost recesses of my soul; no human being, not even my sister, is aware of its existence. Valentine, will you permit me to make a confidant of a friend and reveal to him the love I bear you?"

Valentine started. "A friend, Maximilian; and who is this friend? I tremble at the idea."

"Listen, Valentine. Have you never experienced for any one an irresistible sympathy which made you feel as if though seeing him for the first time, you had known him for a long time; and have you not sought to remember when and where you were acquainted with him; and unable to recall either time or place, have you not come to believe that it was in a former state of being, and that this sympathy is a remembrance newly awakened?"

"Yes."

"Well, that is precisely the feeling which I experienced when I first saw that extraordinary man."

"Extraordinary, did you say?"

"Yes."

"You have known him for some time, then?"

"Scarcely longer than eight or ten days."

"And do you call a man your friend whom you have only known for eight or ten days? Ah, Maximilian, I had hoped you set a higher value on the title of friend."

"Your logic is correct, Valentine; but say what you will, I can never renounce that instinctive sentiment. I believe that this man will be associated with all the good that may come to me in the future, — which sometimes his searching eye appears to foresee and his powerful hand to direct."

"He must be a prophet, then," said Valentine, smiling.

"Indeed!" said Maximilian, "I have often been almost tempted to believe that he can prophesy, — good things especially."

"Ah!" said Valentine, in a mournful tone, "do let me see this man, Maximilian; he may tell me whether I shall ever be loved sufficiently to make amends for all I have suffered."

"My poor girl! you know him already."

"I know him?"

"Yes; it was he who saved the life of your stepmother and her son."

"The Count of Monte Cristo?"

"The same."

"Ah!" cried Valentine, "he is too much the friend of Madame de Villefort ever to be mine."

"The friend of Madame de Villefort! My instinct would not deceive me on that point; I am sure that you are mistaken."

"No, indeed, I am not; for I assure you his power over our household is almost unlimited. Courted by my stepmother, who regards him as the epitome of human wisdom; admired by my father, who says he has never before heard such sublime ideas so eloquently expressed; idolized by Édouard, who notwithstanding his fear of the count's large black eyes, runs to meet him the moment he arrives and opens his hand, in which he is sure to find some delightful present, — M. de Monte Cristo appears to exert a mysterious and almost uncontrollable influence over all the members of our family."

"If such be the case, my dear Valentine, you must yourself have felt, or at all events will soon feel the effects of his presence. He meets Albert de Morcerf in Italy; it is to rescue him from the hands of the banditti. He introduces himself to Madame Danglars; it is that he may give her a royal present. Your stepmother and her son pass before his door; it is that his Nubian may save them from destruction. This man evidently possesses the power to influence events. I never saw more simple tastes united to greater magnificence. His smile is so sweet when he addresses me that I forget it can ever be bitter to others. Ah, Valentine! tell me, has he smiled

in that way upon you? If so, depend on it, you will be happy."

"Me!" said the young girl, "he never even glances at me; on the contrary, if I accidentally cross his path, he appears rather to avoid me. Ah, he is not generous, neither does he possess that supernatural penetration which you attribute to him, — for if he had, he would have perceived that I am unhappy. And if he had been generous, seeing me sad and solitary he would have used his influence to my advantage; and if, as you say, he resembles the sun, he would have warmed my heart with one of his life-giving rays. You say he loves you, Maximilian; how do you know that he does? Men pay deference to an officer like you, with a fierce mustache and a long sabre; but they think they may crush a poor weeping girl with impunity."

"Ah, Valentine! I assure you you are mistaken."

"If it were otherwise; if he treated me diplomatically, — that is to say, like a man who wishes by some means or other to obtain a footing in the house, so that he may ultimately gain the power of dictating to its occupants, — he would, if it had been but once, have honored me with the smile which you extol so loudly; but no, he saw that I was unhappy, he understood that I could be of no use to him, and therefore paid me no regard whatever. Who knows but that in order to please Madame de Villefort and my father, he may not persecute me by every means in his power? It is not just that he should despise me thus, without any reason. Ah, forgive me," said Valentine, perceiving the effect which her words were producing on Maximilian; "I have done wrong, for I have given utterance to thoughts concerning that man which I did not even know existed in my heart. I do not deny the influence of which you speak, or that I have myself expe-

rienced it; but with me it has been productive of evil rather than good."

"Well, Valentine," said Morrel, with a sigh, "we will not discuss the matter further. I will tell him nothing."

"Alas!" said Valentine, "I see that I have given you pain. Oh, that I might press your hand while I ask your pardon? But indeed I am not prejudiced beyond the power of conviction. Tell me, what has this Count of Monte Cristo done for you?"

"I own that your question embarrasses me, Valentine, for I cannot say that the count has rendered me any ostensible service. Still, as I have already told you, I have an instinctive affection for him, the source of which I cannot explain to you. Has the sun done anything for me? No; he warms me with his rays, and it is by his light that I see you, — nothing more. Has such and such a perfume done anything for me? No; its odor charms one of my senses, — that is all I can say when I am asked why I praise it. My friendship for him is as strange and unaccountable as his for me. A secret voice seems to whisper to me that there must be something more than chance in this sudden and unexpected friendship. In his most simple actions as well as in his most secret thoughts, I find a relation to my own. You will perhaps smile at me when I tell you that ever since I have known this man I have the absurd idea that all the good fortune which has befallen me originated from him. However, I have managed to live thirty years without this protection, you would say? No matter, — but wait; here is an example. He has invited me to dine with him on Saturday, which was a very natural thing for him to do. Well, what have I learned since? That your mother and M. de Villefort are both coming to this dinner. I shall meet them there; and who knows what future advantages

may result from the interview? These are circumstances very simple apparently; but I see in them something surprising; I draw from them a strange confidence. I say to myself that this singular man, who appears to fathom the motives of every one, has purposely arranged for me to meet Monsieur and Madame de Villefort; and sometimes, I confess, I have gone so far as to try to read in his eyes whether he has divined the secret of our love."

"My good friend," said Valentine, "I should take you for a visionary, and should tremble for your reason, if I were always to hear you talk in a strain like this. Is it possible that you can see anything more than the merest chance in this meeting? Pray reflect a little. My father, who never goes out, has several times been on the point of refusing this invitation; Madame de Villefort, on the contrary, is burning with the desire of seeing this extraordinary nabob in his own house, and she has with great difficulty prevailed on my father to accompany her. No, no! it is as I have said, Maximilian; there is no one in the world of whom I can ask help but yourself and my grandfather, who is little better than a corpse."

"I see that you are right, logically speaking," said Maximilian; "but your sweet voice, which usually has such power over me, fails to convince me to-day."

"Nor do your words convince me," said Valentine; "and I own that if you have no stronger proof to give me — "

"I have another," said Maximilian, hesitating; "but — in fact, Valentine, I am myself obliged to admit that it is even more absurd than the first."

"So much the worse," said Valentine, smiling.

"It is nevertheless conclusive to my mind. My ten years of service have also confirmed my ideas on the subject of sudden inspirations, for I have several times owed

my life to one of those mysterious impulses which directed me to move at once either to the right or to the left, so that the fatal bullet might pass by me."

"Dear Maximilian, why not attribute your escape to my constant prayers for your safety? When you are away, I pray no longer for myself, but for you."

"Yes, since you have known me," said Morrel, smiling; "but that cannot apply to the time previous to our acquaintance, Valentine."

"You are very provoking, and will not give me credit for anything; but let me hear this second example, which you yourself own to be absurd."

"Well, look through this opening, and you will see the beautiful new horse which I rode here."

"Ah, what a beautiful creature!" cried Valentine; "why did you not bring it close to the gate! I would have talked to it, and it would have understood me."

"It is, as you see, a very valuable animal," said Maximilian. "Well, you know that my means are limited, and that I am what they call a reasonable man. Well, I went to a horse-dealer's, where I saw this magnificent horse, which I have named Medea. I asked the price of it; they told me it was four thousand five hundred livres. I was therefore obliged to give it up, as you may imagine; but I own I went away with a heavy heart, for the horse had looked at me affectionately, had rubbed its head against me, and when I mounted it, had pranced in the most coquettish way imaginable. The same evening some friends of mine visited me, — M. de Château-Renaud, M. Debray, and five or six other choice spirits whom you do not know even by name. They proposed *la bouillotte.* I never play, for I am not rich enough to afford to lose, nor sufficiently poor to desire to gain. But I was at my own house, you understand; so there was nothing to be

done but to send for the cards, which I did. Just as they were sitting down to table, M. de Monte Cristo arrived. He took his seat among them; they played and I won. I am almost ashamed to say that my gains amounted to five thousand livres. We separated at midnight. I could not defer my pleasure, so I took a cabriolet and drove to the horse-dealer's. Feverish and excited, I rang at the door. The person who opened it must have taken me for a madman, for I rushed at once to the stable. Medea was standing at the rack, eating her hay. I immediately put on the saddle and bridle, to which operation she lent herself with the best grace possible; then putting the four thousand five hundred livres into the hands of the astonished dealer, I proceeded to fulfil my intention of passing the night in riding in the Champs Élysées. As I rode by the count's house I perceived a light in one of the windows, and fancied I saw the shadow of his figure moving behind the curtain. Now, Valentine, I firmly believe that he knew of my wish to possess this horse, and that he lost expressly to give me the means of procuring it."

"My dear Maximilian, you are really too fanciful; you will not love me long. A man who accustoms himself to live in such a world of poetry and imagination must find far too little excitement in a common, every-day sort of attachment such as ours. But they are calling me. Do you hear?"

"Ah, Valentine!" said Maximilian, "give me but one finger through this opening in the grating, that I may have the happiness of kissing it."

"Maximilian, we said we would be to each other as two voices, two shadows."

"As you will, Valentine."

"Shall you be happy if I do what you wish?"

"Oh, yes!"

Valentine mounted the bank and passed not only her finger but her whole hand through the opening. Maximilian uttered a cry of delight, and springing forward, seized the hand extended towards him, and imprinted on it a fervent and impassioned kiss. The little hand was then immediately withdrawn, and the young man saw Valentine hurrying towards the house, as though she were almost terrified at her own sensations.

CHAPTER XXI.

MONSIEUR NOIRTIER DE VILLEFORT.

We will now relate what was passing in the house of the *procureur du roi* after the departure of Madame Danglars and her daughter, and during the time of the conversation between Maximilian and Valentine which we have just detailed. M. de Villefort entered his father's room, followed by Madame de Villefort. Both of the visitors, after saluting the old man and speaking to Barrois, — a faithful servant who had been twenty-five years in his service, — took their places on either side of the paralytic.

M. Noirtier was sitting in an armchair, which moved upon castors, in which he was wheeled into the room in the morning, and in the same way drawn out again at night. He was placed before a large glass which reflected the whole apartment, and permitted him to see without any attempt to move, which would have been impossible, all who entered the room and everything which was going on around him. M. Noirtier, immovable as a corpse, looked at the new-comers with a quick and intelligent expression, perceiving at once by their ceremonious courtesy, that they were come on business of an unexpected and official character. Sight and hearing were the only senses remaining, and they appeared left, like two solitary sparks, to animate the miserable body which seemed fit for nothing but the grave; it was only, however, by means of one of these senses that he could reveal the thoughts and feelings which still worked in his mind, and the look by

which he gave expression to this inner life resembled one of those distant lights which are sometimes seen in perspective by the benighted traveller while crossing some cheerless desert, apprising him that there is still another human being who is awake in that silence and darkness. Noirtier's hair was long and white, and flowed over his shoulders, while in his eyes, shaded by thick, black lashes, were concentrated, as it often happens with any organ which is used to the exclusion of the others, all the activity, address, force, and intelligence which were formerly diffused over his whole body. Certainly the movement of the arm, the sound of the voice, and the agility of the body were wanting; but that powerful eye sufficed for all. He commanded with his eyes; he expressed gratitude with his eyes, — in short, his whole appearance produced on the mind the impression of a corpse with living eyes; and nothing could be more startling than to observe that face of marble lighted by a flash of anger or a gleam of delight.

Three persons only could understand this language of the poor paralytic; these were Villefort, Valentine, and the old servant of whom we have already spoken. But as Villefort saw his father but seldom, and then only when absolutely obliged, and as when with him he never tried to give him pleasure by understanding him, all the old man's happiness was centred in his grand-daughter. Valentine, through her love, her patience, and her devotion, had learned to read in Noirtier's look all the varied feelings which were passing in his mind. To this dumb language, which was so unintelligible to others, she answered with all the tones of her voice, with all the expressions of her countenance, and with all the earnestness of her soul; so that animated conversations were sustained between the young girl and the helpless invalid, whose body could

scarcely be called a living one, but who nevertheless was still a man of immense knowledge, of wonderful penetration, and a will as powerful as is still possible where the soul is shut up in matter which it can no longer command. Valentine had resolved this strange problem, and was able easily to understand his thoughts and to convey her own in return; and by her untiring and devoted assiduity, it was seldom that in the ordinary transactions of every-day life she failed to apprehend the wishes of the living, thinking mind, or the wants of the almost inanimate body. As to the servant, he had, as we have said, been with his master for five and twenty years; therefore he knew all his habits, and it was seldom that Noirtier found it necessary to ask for anything.

Villefort did not need the help of either Valentine or the domestic in order to carry on with his father the strange conversation which he was about to begin. As we have said, he perfectly understood the old man's vocabulary; and if he did not use it more often it was only indifference and *ennui* which prevented him from so doing. He therefore allowed Valentine to go into the garden, sent away Barrois, and after having taken a place on the right hand of his father, while Madame de Villefort seated herself on the left, he addressed him thus: —

"I trust you will not be displeased, Monsieur, that Valentine has not come with us, or that I dismissed Barrois, for our conference will be one which could not with propriety be carried on in the presence of either; Madame de Villefort and I have a communication to make to you."

Noirtier's face remained perfectly passive during this long preamble; while on the contrary the eye of Villefort was endeavoring to penetrate into the inmost recesses of the old man's heart.

"This communication," continued the *procureur du roi*, in that cold and decisive tone which seemed at once to preclude all discussion, "will, we are sure, meet with your approbation."

The eye of the invalid still retained that vacancy of expression which prevented his son from obtaining any knowledge of the feelings which were passing in his mind; he listened, — nothing more.

"Monsieur," resumed Villefort, "we are thinking of marrying Valentine."

Had the old man's face been moulded in wax, it could not have shown less emotion at this news than was now to be traced there.

"The marriage will take place in less than three months," said Villefort.

Noirtier's eye still retained its inanimate expression. Madame de Villefort now took her part in the conversation and added, —

"We thought this news would possess an interest for you, Monsieur, who have always entertained a great affection for Valentine; it therefore only now remains for us to tell you the name of the young man for whom she is destined. It is one of the most desirable connections to which Valentine could aspire; he possesses fortune, a high rank in society, and personal qualifications which afford a guarantee for her happiness. His name, however, cannot be wholly unknown to you. The person to whom we allude is M. Franz de Quesnel, Baron d'Épinay."

During the time that his wife was speaking Villefort had narrowly watched the countenance of the old man. When Madame de Villefort pronounced the name of Franz, the pupil of M. Noirtier's eye began to dilate, and his eyelids trembled with the same movement as may be perceived on the lips of an individual about to speak, and he

darted a lightning glance at Madame de Villefort and his son. The *procureur du roi*, who knew the political hatred which had formerly existed between M. Noirtier and the elder D'Épinay, well understood the agitation and anger which the announcement had produced; but feigning not to perceive either, he took up the conversation where his wife had ended.

"Monsieur," said he, "you are aware that Valentine is about to enter her nineteenth year, which renders it important that she should lose no time in forming a suitable connection. Nevertheless, you have not been forgotten in our plans, and we have fully ascertained beforehand that Valentine's future husband will consent, not to live in this house, for that might not be pleasant for the young people, but that you should live with them; so that you and Valentine, who are so attached to each other, would not be separated, your habits would not be deranged, and you would have two children instead of one to take care of you."

Noirtier's look was furious; it was very evident that something desperate was passing in the old man's mind, — for the cry of anger and grief rose to his throat, and not being able to find vent in utterance, appeared almost to choke him, for his face and lips turned quite purple with the struggle. Villefort quietly opened a window, saying, "It is very warm, and the heat affects M. Noirtier." He then returned to his place, but did not sit down.

"This marriage," added Madame de Villefort, "is quite agreeable to the wishes of M. d'Épinay and his family; besides, he has no relations nearer than an uncle and aunt, his mother having died at his birth, and his father having been assassinated in 1815, — that is to say, when he was but two years old. He has therefore only his own will to consider."

"That assassination was a mysterious affair," said Villefort; "and the perpetrators have hitherto escaped detection, although suspicion has fallen on the head of more than one person." Noirtier made such an effort that his lips expanded into a smile. "Now," continued Villefort, "those to whom the guilt really belongs, by whom the crime was committed, on whose heads the justice of man may descend here, and the judgment of God hereafter, would rejoice to be in our place and to have a daughter to offer to M. Franz d'Épinay, and thus to obliterate every suspicious appearance."

Noirtier had succeeded in mastering his emotion more than could have been deemed possible to a person with such an enfeebled and shattered frame. "Yes, I understand," was the reply contained in his look; and this look expressed a feeling of strong indignation mixed with profound contempt. Villefort fully understood his father's meaning, and answered by a slight shrug of his shoulders. He then motioned to his wife to take leave.

"Now, Monsieur," said Madame de Villefort, "I must bid you farewell. Would you like me to send Édouard to you for a short time?"

It had been agreed that the old man should express his approbation by closing his eyes, his refusal by winking them several times, and if he had some desire or feeling to express he raised them to heaven. If he wanted Valentine, he closed his right eye only, and if Barrois, the left. At Madame de Villefort's proposition he instantly winked his eyes. Provoked by a complete refusal, she bit her lip and said, "Then shall I send Valentine to you?" The old man closed his eyes eagerly, thereby intimating that such was his wish. Monsieur and Madame de Villefort bowed and left the room, giving orders that Valentine should be summoned. Valentine already had been notified that she

would have special occasion during the day for an interview with M. Noirtier. She entered the room with a color still heightened by emotion, just after her parents had quitted it. One look was sufficient to tell her that her grandfather was suffering, and that there was much on his mind which he was wishing to communicate to her. "Dear grandpapa," cried she, "what has happened? They have vexed you, and you are angry?"

The paralytic closed his eyes in token of assent.

"Against whom, then? Against my father? no. Against Madame de Villefort? no. Against me?"

The old man gave the sign of assent.

"Against me?" said Valentine, in astonishment.

The old man repeated the sign.

"And what have I done, dear grandpapa, that you should be angry with me?" cried Valentine.

There was no answer; and she continued, "I have not seen you all day. Has any one been speaking to you about me?"

"Yes," said the old man's look, with eagerness.

"Let me think a moment. I do assure you, grandpapa —Ah! Monsieur and Madame de Villefort have just left this room, have they not?"

"Yes."

"And it was they who told you something which made you angry? What was it, then? May I go and ask them, that I may have the opportunity of making my peace with you?"

"No, no!" said Noirtier's look.

"Ah! you frighten me. What can they have said?" and she again tried to think what it could be.

"Ah! I know," said she, lowering her voice and going close to the old man; "they have been speaking of my marriage, — have they not?"

"Yes," replied the angry look.

"I understand; you are displeased at the silence I have preserved on the subject. The reason of it was that they had insisted on my keeping the matter a secret, and begged me not to tell you anything about it; they did not even acquaint me with their intentions, and I only discovered them by chance, — that is why I have been so reserved with you, dear grandpapa. Pray forgive me."

But there was no look calculated to reassure her; all it seemed to say was, "It is not only your reserve which afflicts me."

"What is it then?" asked the young girl. "Perhaps you think I shall abandon you, dear grandpapa, and that I shall forget you when I am married?"

"No."

"They told you, then, that M. d'Épinay consented to our all living together?"

"Yes."

"Then why are you still vexed and grieved?"

The old man's eyes beamed with an expression of gentle affection.

"Yes, I understand," said Valentine; "it is because you love me."

The old man assented.

"And you are afraid I shall be unhappy?"

"Yes."

"You do not like M. Franz?"

The eyes repeated several times, "No, no, no."

"Then you are vexed with the engagement?"

"Yes."

"Well, listen," said Valentine, throwing herself on her knees, and putting her arm round her grandfather's neck; "I am vexed too, for I do not love M. Franz d'Épinay." An expression of intense joy illumined the old man's eyes.

"When I wished to retire into a convent, you remember how angry you were with me?" A tear trembled in the eye of the invalid. "Well," continued Valentine, "the reason of my proposing it was that I might escape this hateful marriage, which drives me to despair." Noirtier's breathing became thick and short. "Then the idea of this marriage really grieves you too? Ah, if you could but help me; if we could both together defeat their plan! But you are unable to oppose them; you, whose mind is so quick, and whose will is so firm, are nevertheless as weak and unequal to the contest as I am myself. Alas, you, who would have been such a powerful protector to me in the days of your health and strength, can now only sympathize in my joys and sorrows! It is the last happiness which God has forgotten to take away with all the rest."

At these words there appeared in Noirtier's eye an expression of such deep meaning that the young girl thought she could read these words there, "You are mistaken; I can still do much for you."

"Do you think you can help me, dear grandpapa?" said Valentine.

"Yes." Noirtier raised his eyes; it was the sign agreed on between him and Valentine when he wanted anything.

"What is it you want, dear grandpapa?" said Valentine; and she endeavored to recall to mind all the things which he would be likely to need. And as the ideas presented themselves to her mind, she repeated them aloud; but finding that all her efforts elicited nothing but a constant "No," "Come," said she, "the grand resort, since I am so foolish." She then recited all the letters of the alphabet from A down to N, questioning with her smile the eye of the paralytic. At N, Noirtier made an affirmative sign.

"Ah," said Valentine, "the thing you desire begins

with the letter N; it is with N that we have to do, then. Well, let me see, what can you want which begins with N? Na — Ne — Ni — No — "

"Yes, yes, yes," said the old man's eye.

"Ah, it is No, then?"

"Yes." Valentine brought a dictionary, which she placed on a desk before Noirtier; she opened it, and seeing that the old man's eye was thoroughly fixed on its pages, she ran her finger quickly up and down the columns. During the six years which had passed since Noirtier first fell into this sad state, Valentine's powers of invention had been too often put to the test not to render her expert in devising expedients for gaining a knowledge of his wishes; and the constant practice had so perfected her in the art that she guessed the old man's meaning as quickly as if he himself had been able to seek for what he wanted. At the word "notary," Noirtier made a sign to her to stop. "Notary," said she; "do you want a notary, dear grandpapa?" The old man again signified that it was a notary he desired.

"You wish a notary to be sent for, then?" said Valentine.

"Yes."

"Shall my father be informed of your wish?"

"Yes."

"Do you wish the notary to be sent for immediately?"

"Yes."

"Then they shall go for him directly, dear grandpapa. Is that all you want?"

"Yes."

Valentine rang the bell and ordered the servant to tell Monsieur or Madame de Villefort that they were requested to come to M. Noirtier's room.

"Are you satisfied?" said Valentine. "Yes? I am sure you are. Eh? it was n't easy to discover that, was it?"

and the young girl smiled on her grandfather as if he had been a child.

M. de Villefort entered, followed by Barrois. "What do you want me for, Monsieur?" demanded he of the paralytic.

"Monsieur," said Valentine, "my grandfather wishes for a notary."

At this strange and unexpected demand M. de Villefort and his father exchanged looks. "Yes," signified the latter, with a firmness which indicated that with the help of Valentine and his old servant, who both knew what his wishes were, he was quite prepared to maintain the contest.

"Do you wish for a notary?" asked Villefort.

"Yes."

"What to do?"

Noirtier made no answer.

"What do you want with a notary?" repeated Villefort.

The invalid's eye remained fixed, by which expression he intended to intimate that his resolution was unalterable.

"Is it to do us some ill turn? Do you think it is worth while?" said Villefort.

"Still," said Barrois, prepared to insist with the freedom and fidelity of an old servant, "if M. Noirtier asks for a notary, I suppose he really wishes for a notary; therefore I shall go at once and fetch one." Barrois acknowledged no master but Noirtier, and never allowed his desires in any way to be contradicted.

"Yes, I want a notary," intimated the old man, shutting his eyes with a look of defiance, which seemed to say, "and I should like to see the person who dares to refuse my request."

"You shall have a notary as you absolutely wish for one, Monsieur," said Villefort; "but I shall explain to

him your state of health and make excuses for you, for the scene will be ridiculous."

"Never mind that," said Barrois; "I shall go and fetch a notary, nevertheless;" and the old servant departed triumphantly on his mission.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE WILL.

As soon as Barrois had left the room, Noirtier looked at Valentine with that peculiar expression which conveyed so much deep meaning. The young girl perfectly understood the look, and so did Villefort, for his countenance became clouded, and he knitted his eyebrows angrily. He took a seat and quietly awaited the arrival of the notary. Noirtier saw him seat himself with an appearance of perfect indifference, at the same time giving a side look at Valentine, which made her understand that she also was to remain in the room. Three-quarters of an hour after, Barrois returned, bringing the notary with him.

"Monsieur," said Villefort, after the first salutations were over, "you were sent for by M. Noirtier, whom you see here. All his limbs have become completely paralyzed; he has lost his voice also, and we ourselves find much trouble in endeavoring to catch some fragments of his meaning." Noirtier cast an appealing look on Valentine, which look was at once so earnest and imperative that she answered immediately. "Monsieur," said she, "I perfectly understand my grandfather's meaning at all times."

"That is quite true," said Barrois; "and that is what I told the gentleman as we walked along."

"Permit me," said the notary, turning first to Villefort and then to Valentine, — "permit me to state that the

case in question is just one of those in which a public officer like myself cannot proceed inconsiderately without thereby incurring a dangerous responsibility. The first thing necessary to render an act valid is that the notary should be thoroughly convinced that he has faithfully interpreted the will of the person dictating. Now, I cannot be sure of the approbation or disapprobation of a client who cannot speak; and as the object of his desire or his repugnance cannot be clearly proved to me, on account of his want of speech, my services here would be quite useless, and cannot be legally exercised."

The notary then prepared to retire. An imperceptible smile of triumph was expressed on the lips of the *procureur du roi*. Noirtier looked at Valentine with an expression so full of grief that she arrested the departure of the notary. "Monsieur," said she, "the language which I speak with my grandfather may be easily learned; and I can teach you in a few minutes to understand it almost as well as I can myself. Will you tell me what you require in order to set your conscience quite at ease on the subject?"

"In order to render an act valid I must be certain of the approbation or disapprobation of my client. Illness of the body would not affect the validity of the deed; but sanity of mind is absolutely requisite."

"Well, Monsieur, by the help of two signs you may ascertain with perfect certainty that my grandfather is still in the full possession of all his mental faculties. M. Noirtier, being deprived of voice and motion, is accustomed to convey his meaning by closing his eyes when he wishes to signify 'yes,' and to wink when he means 'no.' You now know quite enough to enable you to converse with M. Noirtier; try."

Noirtier gave Valentine such a look of tenderness and

gratitude that it was comprehended even by the notary himself. "You have heard and understood what your grand-daughter has been saying, Monsieur?" asked the notary. Noirtier closed his eyes. "And you approve of what she said, — that is to say, you declare that the signs which she mentioned are really those by means of which you are accustomed to convey your thoughts?"

"Yes."

"It was you who sent for me?"

"Yes."

"To make your will!"

"Yes."

"And you do not wish me to go away without fulfilling your original intentions?" The old man winked violently.

"Well, Monsieur," said the young girl, "do you understand now, and is your conscience perfectly at rest on the subject?"

But before the notary could answer, Villefort had drawn him aside.

"Monsieur," said he, "do you suppose for a moment that a man can sustain a physical shock such as M. Noirtier has received, without any detriment to his mental faculties?"

"It is not exactly that, sir," said the notary, "which makes me uneasy; but the difficulty will be to divine his thoughts so as to be able to elicit answers."

"You must see that to be an utter impossibility," said Villefort.

Valentine and the old man heard this conversation; and Noirtier fixed his eye so earnestly on Valentine that she felt bound to make reply.

"Monsieur," said she, "that need not make you uneasy, however difficult it may at first sight appear to be.

I can discover and explain to you my grandfather's thoughts so as to put an end to all your doubts and fears on the subject. I have now been six years with M. Noirtier; and let him tell you if ever once during that time he has entertained a thought which he was unable to make me understand."

"No," signed the old man.

"Let us try what we can do, then," said the notary. "You accept this young lady as your interpreter, M. Noirtier?"

The paralytic made an affirmative sign.

"Well, sir, what do you require of me, and what document is it that you wish to be drawn up?"

Valentine named all the letters of the alphabet until she came to T. At this letter the eloquent eye of Noirtier gave her notice that she was to stop.

"It is very evident that it is the letter T which M. Noirtier wants," said the notary.

"Wait," said Valentine; and turning to her grandfather she repeated, "Ta — Te."

The old man stopped her at the second of these syllables. Valentine then took the dictionary, and the notary watched her while she turned over the pages. She passed her finger slowly down the columns, and when she came to the word "testament," M. Noirtier's eye bade her stop. "Testament!" cried the notary; "it is very evident that M. Noirtier wishes to make his will."

"Yes, yes, yes!" motioned the invalid.

"Really, Monsieur, you must allow that this is most extraordinary," said the astonished notary, turning to M. de Villefort.

"Yes," said the *procureur*, "and I think the will promises to be yet more extraordinary; for I cannot see how it is to be drawn up without the intervention of Valentine,

and she may perhaps be considered as too much interested in its contents to allow of her being a suitable interpreter of the obscure and ill-defined wishes of her grandfather."

"No, no, no!" replied the eye of the paralytic.

"What!" said Villefort, "Valentine is not interested in your will?"

"No."

"Monsieur," said the notary, whose interest had been greatly excited, and who had resolved on publishing far and wide the account of this extraordinary and picturesque scene, "what appeared so impossible to me an hour ago, has now become quite easy and practicable; and this may be a perfectly valid will, provided it be read in the presence of seven witnesses, approved by the testator, and sealed by the notary in the presence of the witnesses. As to the time, it will certainly occupy rather more than ordinary wills. There are certain forms necessary to be gone through, and which are always the same. As to the details, the greater part will be afforded by the state in which we find the affairs of the testator, and by yourself, who, having had the management of them, can doubtless give full information on the subject. But besides all this, in order that the instrument may be incontestable, we will give it the greatest possible authenticity; therefore one of my colleagues will help me, and contrary to custom will assist in the dictation of the testament. Are you satisfied, Monsieur?" continued the notary, addressing the old man.

"Yes," looked the invalid, delighted at being understood.

"What is he going to do?" thought Villefort, whose position demanded so much reserve, but who was longing to know what were the intentions of his father. He left

the room to give orders for another notary to be sent for; but Barrois, who had heard all that passed, had guessed his master's wishes, and had already set out. The *procureur du roi* then told his wife to come up. In the course of a quarter of an hour every one had assembled in the chamber of the paralytic; the second notary had also arrived. A few words sufficed for a mutual understanding between the two officers of the law. They read to Noirtier the formal copy of a will, in order to give him an idea of the terms in which such documents are generally couched; then in order to test the capacity of the testator, the first notary said, turning towards him, "When a man makes his will, it is generally in favor or in prejudice of some person."

"Yes," intimated Noirtier.

"Have you an exact idea of the amount of your fortune?"

"Yes."

"I will name to you several sums which will increase by gradation; you will stop me when I reach the one representing the amount of your own possessions?"

"Yes."

There was a kind of solemnity in this interrogation. Never had the struggle between mind and matter been more apparent than now; and if it was not a sublime, it was at least a curious spectacle. They had formed a circle round the invalid; the second notary was sitting at a table, prepared for writing, and his colleague was standing before the testator in the act of interrogating him on the subject to which we have alluded. "Your fortune exceeds three hundred thousand livres, does it not?" asked he. Noirtier made a sign that it did. "Do you possess four hundred thousand livres?" inquired the notary. Noirtier's eye remained immovable. "Five hundred

thousand?" The same expression continued. "Six hundred thousand; seven hundred thousand; eight hundred thousand; nine hundred thousand?" Noirtier stopped him at the last-named sum.

"You are then in possession of nine hundred thousand livres?" asked the notary.

"Yes."

"In landed property?"

"No."

"In stock?"

"Yes."

"The stock is in your own hands?"

The look which M. Noirtier cast on Barrois showed that there was something wanting which he knew where to find; the old servant left the room, and presently returned, bringing with him a small casket.

"Do you permit us to open this casket?" asked the notary. Noirtier gave his assent. They opened it, and found nine hundred thousand livres in bank scrip. The first notary handed over each note, as he examined it, to his colleague. The total amount was found to be as M. Noirtier had stated.

"It is all as he has said," observed the first notary; "it is very evident that the mind still retains its full force and vigor." Then turning towards the paralytic, he said, "You possess, then, nine hundred thousand livres of capital, which according to the manner in which you have invested it ought to bring in an income of about forty thousand livres?"

"Yes."

"To whom do you desire to leave this fortune?"

"Oh!" said Madame de Villefort, "there is not much doubt on that subject. M. Noirtier tenderly loves his grand-daughter, Mademoiselle de Villefort; she has nursed

and tended him for six years, and has by her devoted attention fully secured the affection, I had almost said the gratitude of her grandfather; and it is but just that she should reap the fruit of her devotion."

The eye of Noirtier clearly showed by its expression that he was not deceived by the false construction given by Madame de Villefort to the motives which she supposed him to entertain.

"Is it, then, to Mademoiselle Valentine de Villefort that you leave these nine hundred thousand livres?" demanded the notary, thinking he had only to insert this clause, but waiting first for the assent of Noirtier, which it was necessary should be given before all the witnesses of this singular scene. Valentine, when her name was made the subject of discussion, had stepped back to escape unpleasant observation; her eyes were cast down, and she was crying. The old man looked at her for an instant with an expression of the deepest tenderness; then turning towards the notary, he significantly winked his eye in token of dissent.

"What!" said the notary, "do you not intend making Mademoiselle Valentine de Villefort your residuary legatee?"

"No."

"You are not making any mistake, are you?" said the notary; "you really mean no?"

"No!" repeated Noirtier; "no!"

Valentine raised her head; she was struck dumb with astonishment. It was not so much the conviction that she was disinherited which caused her grief, but her total inability to account for the feelings which had provoked her grandfather to such an act; but Noirtier looked at her with so much affectionate tenderness that she exclaimed, "Oh, grandpapa! I see now that it is only your

fortune of which you deprive me; you still leave me the love which I have always enjoyed."

"Ah, yes, most assuredly!" said the eyes of the paralytic; for he closed them with an expression which Valentine could not mistake.

"Thank you! thank you!" she murmured.

The old man's declaration that Valentine was not the destined inheritor of his fortune had excited the hopes of Madame de Villefort; she approached the invalid and said, "Then doubtless, dear M. Noirtier, you intend leaving your fortune to your grandson, Édouard de Villefort?"

The winking of the eyes which answered this speech was most decided and terrible, and expressed a feeling almost amounting to hatred.

"No," said the notary; "then perhaps it is to your son, M. de Villefort?"

"No," replied the old man.

The two notaries looked at each other in mute astonishment. Villefort and his wife both blushed and changed color, one from shame, the other from anger.

"What have we all done, then, dear grandpapa?" said Valentine; "you no longer seem to love any of us." The old man's eye passed rapidly from Villefort and his wife, and rested on Valentine with a look of unutterable fondness. "Well," said she, "if you love me, grandpapa, try to conform to that love your actions at this present moment. You know me well enough to be quite sure that I have never thought of your fortune; besides, they say I am already rich in right of my mother, — too rich, even. Explain yourself, then."

Noirtier fixed his intelligent eyes on Valentine's hand.

"My hand?" said she.

"Yes."

"Her hand!" exclaimed every one.

"Oh, gentlemen! you see it is all useless, and that my father's mind is really impaired," said Villefort.

"Ah!" cried Valentine, suddenly, "I understand! it is my marriage you mean, is it not, dear grandpapa?"

"Yes, yes, yes," signed the paralytic, casting on Valentine a look of joyful gratitude for having divined his meaning.

"You are angry with us all on account of this marriage, are you not?"

"Yes."

"Really, this is too absurd," said Villefort.

"Excuse me, Monsieur," replied the notary; "on the contrary, M. Noirtier's meaning is quite evident to me, and I can quite easily connect the train of ideas passing in his mind."

"You do not wish me to marry M. Franz d'Épinay?" observed Valentine.

"I do not wish it," said the eye of her grandfather.

"And you disinherit your grand-daughter," continued the notary, "because she has contracted an engagement contrary to your wishes?"

"Yes."

"So that but for this marriage, she would have been your heir?"

"Yes."

There was a profound silence. The two notaries were holding a consultation; Valentine, clasping her hands, was looking at her grandfather with a smile of gratitude; Villefort was biting his lips with vexation; Madame de Villefort could not repress an inward feeling of joy, which in spite of herself appeared in her whole countenance.

"But," said Villefort, who was the first to break the silence, "I consider that I am the best judge of the pro

priety of the marriage in question. I am the only person possessing the right to dispose of my daughter's hand. It is my wish that she should marry M. Franz d'Épinay, and she shall marry him!"

Valentine sank weeping into a chair.

"Sir," said the notary, "how do you intend disposing of your fortune in case Mademoiselle de Villefort still determines on marrying M. Franz?"

The old man gave no answer.

"You will of course dispose of it in some way?"

"Yes."

"In favor of some member of your family?"

"No."

"Do you intend devoting it to charitable purposes, then?" pursued the notary.

"Yes."

"But," said the notary, "you are aware that the law does not allow a son to be entirely deprived of his patrimony?"

"Yes."

"You intend, then, to dispose of only that part of your fortune which the law allows you to alienate?"

Noirtier made no answer.

"Do you still wish to dispose of all?"

"Yes."

"But they will contest the will after your death."

"No."

"My father knows me," replied Villefort; "he is quite sure that his wishes will be held sacred by me. Besides, he understands that in my position I cannot plead against the poor."

The eye of Noirtier beamed with triumph.

"What do you decide on, Monsieur?" asked the notary of Villefort.

"Nothing, Monsieur. It is a resolution which my father

has taken; and I know he never alters his mind. I am quite resigned. These nine hundred thousand livres will go out of the family to enrich some hospital; but I will not yield to the caprices of an old man. I shall act according to my conscience."

Having said this, Villefort quitted the room with his wife, leaving his father at liberty to do as he pleased. The same day the will was made, the witnesses were brought, it was approved by the old man, sealed in the presence of all, and given in charge to M. Deschamps, the family notary.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE TELEGRAPH.

MONSIEUR AND MADAME DE VILLEFORT found on their return that the Count of Monte Cristo, who had come to visit them in their absence, had been ushered into the drawing-room and was still awaiting them there. Madame de Villefort, who was too excited to appear so soon before visitors, retired to her bedroom, while the *procureur du roi*, who could better depend upon himself, proceeded at once to the drawing-room. But whatever his mastery over his emotions, and however he controlled the expression of his face, he could not so entirely banish the cloud from his brow but that the count, who approached him with a radiant smile, was struck by his gloomy and thoughtful manner.

"Good heavens!" said Monte Cristo, after the first compliments were over, "what is the matter with you, M. de Villefort? Have I arrived at the moment that you were drawing up some capital indictment?"

Villefort tried to smile. "No, Monsieur the Count," he replied, "I am the only victim in this case. It is I who lose my cause; and it is ill-luck, obstinacy, and folly which have decided it against me."

"To what do you allude?" said Monte Cristo, with well-feigned interest. "Have you really met with some great misfortune?"

"Oh! Monsieur the Count," said Villefort, with a bitter

smile, "it is only a loss of money which I have sustained, — nothing worth mentioning, I assure you."

"True," said Monte Cristo, "the loss of money becomes almost immaterial with a fortune such as you possess, and a mind philosophical and elevated like your own."

"It is not so much the loss of the money which vexes me," said Villefort, "though, after all, nine hundred thousand livres are worth regretting; but I am the more annoyed with this fate, chance, or whatever you please to call the power which has destroyed my hopes and my fortune, and may blast the prospects of my child also, as it is all occasioned by an old man relapsed into second childhood."

"What do you say?" said the count; "nine hundred thousand livres? it is indeed a sum to be regretted, even by a philosopher. And who is the cause of all this annoyance?"

"My father, of whom I have spoken to you."

"M. Noirtier! but I thought you told me he had become entirely paralyzed, and that all his faculties were completely destroyed?"

"Yes, his bodily faculties, for he can neither move nor speak; nevertheless, he thinks, acts, and wills, as you see. I left him about five minutes ago, and he is now occupied in dictating his will to two notaries."

"But to do this he must have spoken?"

"He has done better than that, — he has made himself understood."

"How was such a thing possible?"

"By the help of his eyes, which are still full of life, and as you perceive, possess the power of inflicting mortal injury."

"My dear," said Madame de Villefort, who had just entered the room, "perhaps you exaggerate the evil."

"Good-morning, Madame!" said the count, bowing.

Madame de Villefort acknowledged the salutation with her most gracious smile.

"What is this that M. de Villefort has been telling me?" demanded Monte Cristo, "and what incomprehensible misfortune —"

"Incomprehensible is the word!" interrupted the *procureur du roi*, shrugging his shoulders; "an old man's caprice."

"And is there no way to make him revoke his decision?"

"Yes," said Madame de Villefort; "and it is still entirely in the power of my husband to cause the will, which is now in prejudice of Valentine, to be altered in her favor."

The count, who perceived that Monsieur and Madame de Villefort were beginning to speak in parables, appeared to pay no attention to the conversation, and feigned to be busily engaged in watching Édouard, who was mischievously pouring some ink into the bird's water-glass.

"My dear," said Villefort, in answer to his wife, "you know I have never been accustomed to play the patriarch in my family; nor have I ever considered that the fate of a universe was to be decided by my nod. Nevertheless, it is necessary that my will should be respected in my family, and that the folly of an old man and the caprice of a child should not be allowed to overturn a project which I have entertained for so many years. The Baron d'Épinay was my friend, as you know, and an alliance with his son is the most suitable thing that could possibly be arranged."

"Do you think," said Madame de Villefort, "that Valentine is in league with him? She has always been opposed to this marriage; and I should not be at all surprised if what we have just seen and heard is nothing but the execution of a plan concerted between them."

"Madame," said Villefort, "believe me, a fortune of nine hundred thousand livres is not so easily renounced."

"She could nevertheless make up her mind to renounce the world, Monsieur, since it is only about a year ago that she herself proposed entering a convent."

"Never mind," replied Villefort; "I say that this marriage shall be consummated!"

"Notwithstanding your father's wishes to the contrary?" said Madame de Villefort, selecting a new point of attack. "That is a serious thing!"

Monte Cristo, who pretended not to be listening, heard however every word that was said.

"Madame," replied Villefort, "I can truly say that I have always entertained a high respect for my father, because to the natural feeling of relationship was added the consciousness of his moral superiority. The name of father is sacred in two senses, — he should be reverenced as the author of our being, and as a master whom we ought to obey; but under the present circumstances, I am justified in doubting the wisdom of an old man who because he hated the father vents his anger on the son; it would be ridiculous in me to regulate my conduct by such caprices. I shall still continue to preserve the same respect towards M. Noirtier. I will suffer without complaint the pecuniary deprivation to which he has subjected me; but I will remain firm in my determination, and the world shall see which party has reason on his side. Consequently I shall marry my daughter to the Baron Franz d'Épinay, because I consider it would be a proper and eligible match for her to make, and in short, because I choose to bestow my daughter's hand on whomsoever I please."

"What!" said the count, the approbation of whose eye Villefort had frequently solicited during this speech. "What! do you say that M. Noirtier disinherits Made-

moiselle de Villefort because she is going to marry M. le Baron Franz d'Épinay?"

"Yes, Monsieur, that is the reason," said Villefort, shrugging his shoulders.

"The apparent reason, at least," said Madame de Villefort.

"The real reason, Madame, I can assure you; I know my father."

"It is inconceivable," said the young woman. "But I want to know in what way M. d'Épinay can have displeased your father more than any other person?"

"I believe I know M. Franz d'Épinay," said the count; "is he not the son of General de Quesnel, who was created Baron d'Épinay by Charles X.?"

"The same," said Villefort.

"Well; but he is a charming young man according to my ideas."

"He is, which makes me believe that it is only an excuse of M. Noirtier's to prevent his grand-daughter from marrying; old men are always so selfish in their affection," said Madame de Villefort.

"But," said Monte Cristo, "do you not know any cause for this hatred?"

"Ah, *mon Dieu!* who can tell?"

"Perhaps it is some political difference?"

"My father and the Baron d'Épinay lived in those stormy times of which I saw only the last few days," said Villefort.

"Was not your father a Bonapartist?" asked Monte Cristo; "I think I remember that you told me something of that kind."

"My father has been a Jacobin more than anything else," said Villefort, carried by his emotion beyond the bounds of prudence; "and the senator's robe which Na-

poleon cast on his shoulders only served to disguise the old man without in any degree changing him. When my father conspired, it was not for the emperor, it was against the Bourbons; for M. Noirtier possessed this peculiarity, — he never projected any Utopian schemes which could not be realized, but strove for possibilities; and he applied to the realization of these possibilities the terrible theories of the Montagnards, who never recoiled from any course of action."

"Well," said Monte Cristo, "it is just as I thought; it was politics which brought Noirtier and M. d'Épinay into personal contact. Although General d'Épinay served under Napoleon, did he not still retain Royalist sentiments? And was he not the person who was assassinated one evening on leaving a Bonapartist meeting to which he had been invited on the supposition of his favoring the cause of the emperor?"

Villefort looked at the count almost with terror.

"Am I mistaken, then?" said Monte Cristo.

"No, Monsieur, the facts were precisely what you have stated," said Madame de Villefort; "and it was to prevent the renewal of old feuds that M. de Villefort formed the idea of uniting in the bonds of affection the two children of these inveterate enemies."

"It was a sublime and charitable thought," said Monte Cristo; "and the whole world should applaud it. It would be fine to see Mademoiselle Noirtier de Villefort assuming the title of Madame Franz d'Épinay."

Villefort shuddered and looked at Monte Cristo as if he wished to read in his countenance the real feelings which had dictated the words he had just pronounced. But the count completely baffled the penetration of the *procureur du roi*, and prevented him from discovering anything beneath his habitual smile.

"Although," said Villefort, "it will be a serious thing for Valentine to lose the fortune of her grandfather, I do not think the marriage will be prevented on that account. I do not believe that M. d'Épinay will be frightened at this pecuniary loss. He will see that I am worth perhaps more than that amount, which I will sacrifice to the keeping of my word. Besides, he knows that Valentine is rich in right of her mother, and that she will in all probability inherit the fortune of Monsieur and Madame de Saint-Méran, her mother's parents, who both love her tenderly."

"And who deserve to be loved and cared for as Valentine has loved and cared for M. Noirtier," said Madame de Villefort. "Besides, they are to come to Paris in about a month; and Valentine, after the affront she has received, need not consider it necessary to continue to bury herself alive by being shut up with M. Noirtier."

The count listened with satisfaction to this tale of wounded self-love and defeated ambition. "But it seems to me," said he, — "and I must begin by asking your pardon for what I am about to say, — that if M. Noirtier disinherits Mademoiselle de Villefort on account of her marrying a man whose father he detested, he cannot have the same cause of complaint against that dear Édouard."

"True," said Madame de Villefort, with an intonation of voice which it is impossible to describe; "is it not unjust, — shamefully unjust? Poor Édouard is as much M. Noirtier's grandchild as Valentine, and yet if she had not been going to marry M. Franz, M. Noirtier would have left her all his money; and moreover, though Édouard bears the family name, Valentine will still be three times richer than he, even after being disinherited by her grandfather."

That stroke having succeeded, the count listened and said no more.

"Monsieur the Count," said Villefort, "we will not entertain you any longer with our family misfortunes. It is true that my patrimony will go to endow charitable institutions, and my father will have deprived me of my lawful inheritance without any reason for doing so; but I shall have the satisfaction of knowing that I have acted like a man of sense and feeling. M. d'Épinay, to whom I had promised the interest of this sum, shall receive it, even if I have to impose on myself the most cruel privations."

"However," said Madame de Villefort, returning to the one idea which incessantly occupied her mind, "perhaps it would be better to represent this unlucky affair to M. d'Épinay, in order to give him the opportunity of himself renouncing his claim to the hand of Mademoiselle de Villefort."

"Ah, that would be a great pity!" said Villefort.

"A great pity!" said Monte Cristo.

"Undoubtedly," said Villefort, moderating the tones of his voice; "a marriage, once concerted and then broken off, throws a sort of discredit on a young lady. Then, again, the old reports, which I was so anxious to put an end to, will instantly gain ground, — no, there will be nothing of the kind. M. d'Épinay, if he is an honorable man, will consider himself more than ever pledged to Mademoiselle de Villefort, — unless he were actuated by a decided feeling of avarice; but that is impossible."

"I agree with M. de Villefort," said Monte Cristo, fixing his eyes on Madame de Villefort; "and if I were sufficiently intimate with him to offer him advice, I would persuade him, since, as I have been told, M. d'Épinay is coming back, to settle this affair at once beyond all possibility of revocation. I will answer for the success of a project which will reflect so much honor on M. de Villefort."

The *procureur du roi* rose, delighted with the proposition; but his wife slightly changed color. "Well, that is all that I wanted, and I will be guided by a counsellor such as you are," said he, extending his hand to Monte Cristo. "Therefore let every one here look upon what has happened to-day as if it had not happened; there is no change in our plans."

"Sir," said the count, "the world, unjust as it is, will be pleased with your resolution; your friends will be proud of you, and M. d'Épinay, even if he took Mademoiselle de Villefort without any dowry, which he will not do, would be delighted with the idea of entering a family which could make such sacrifices in order to keep a promise and fulfil a duty." At the conclusion of these words, the count rose to depart.

"Are you going to leave us, Monsieur the Count?" said Madame de Villefort.

"I am sorry to say I must do so, Madame; I came only to remind you of your promise for Saturday."

"Did you fear that we should forget it?"

"You are very good, Madame; but M. de Villefort has so many and sometimes so urgent occupations."

"My husband has given his word, Monsieur," said Madame de Villefort. "You see that he keeps it when he has everything to lose; he will keep it by a stronger inducement when he has everything to gain by doing so."

"And," said Villefort, "is it at your house in the Champs Élysées that you receive your visitors?"

"No," said Monte Cristo, "and that makes your kindness greater; it is in the country."

"In the country?"

"Yes."

"Where is it, then? Near Paris, is it not?"

"Very near; only half a league from the barriers, — it is at Auteuil."

"At Auteuil?" said Villefort. "True, Madame told me you lived at Auteuil, since it was to your house that she was taken. And in what part of Auteuil do you reside?"

"Rue de la Fontaine."

"Rue de la Fontaine!" exclaimed Villefort, in an agitated tone; "at what number?"

"No. 28."

"Ah!" cried Villefort, "it is you, then, who have bought M. de Saint-Méran's house?"

"Did it belong to M. de Saint-Méran?" demanded Monte Cristo.

"Yes," replied Madame de Villefort; "and, would you believe it, Monsieur the Count — "

"Believe what?"

"You think that house is attractive, do you not?"

"I think it charming."

"Well; my husband would never live in it."

"Indeed!" returned Monte Cristo; "that is a prejudice on your part, Monsieur, for which I am quite at a loss to account."

"I do not like Auteuil, Monsieur," said the *procureur du roi*, making an effort to control himself.

"But I hope you will not carry your antipathy so far as to deprive me of the pleasure of your company, Monsieur," said Monte Cristo.

"No, Monsieur the Count — I hope — I assure you I will do all I can," stammered Villefort.

"Oh," said Monte Cristo, "I admit no excuse. On Saturday, at six o'clock, I shall be expecting you; and if you fail to come, I shall think — for how do I know to the contrary? — that this house, which has remained un-

inhabited for twenty years, must have some gloomy tradition or dreadful legend connected with it."

"I will come, Monsieur the Count, I will be sure to come!" said Villefort, eagerly.

"Thank you," said Monte Cristo; "now you must permit me to take my leave of you."

"Ah, yes; you said you were compelled to leave us, Monsieur the Count," said Madame de Villefort, "and, I think, were on the point of telling us for what purpose, when you were interrupted by something else."

"Indeed, Madame," said Monte Cristo, "I scarcely know if I dare tell you where I am going."

"Bah! tell me, nevertheless."

"Well, then, I am going — idler that I am — to see a thing on which I have sometimes mused for hours together."

"What is it?"

"A telegraph. So now I have told my secret."

"A telegraph!" repeated Madame de Villefort.

"Yes, a telegraph! I have often seen one placed at the end of a road on a hillock; and in the light of the sun its black arms, bending in every direction, always reminded one of the claws of an immense beetle. And I assure you it was never without emotion that I gazed on it, for I could not help thinking that those queer signals, cleaving the air with precision, to convey to the distance of three hundred leagues the ideas and wishes of a man sitting at a table at one end of the line to another man similarly placed at the opposite extremity, would become visible on the gray background of clouds, or on the blue sky, simply by an act of volition on the part of the all-powerful individual communicating the intelligence. I have thought then of genii, sylphs, gnomes, — in short, of occult forces, — until I laughed aloud at the freaks of my

own imagination. Now, it never occurred to me to wish for a nearer inspection of these large insects, with their long black claws, for I always feared to find under their stone wings some little human genius very grave, very pedantic, stuffed with science, mystery, and the black arts. But one fine day I learned that the operator of each telegraph is only a poor devil, hired for twelve hundred livres a year, and employed all the day, not in studying the heavens like an astronomer, nor in gazing on the water like an angler, nor even in enjoying the privilege of observing the country around him, but in watching his fellow-insect, four or five leagues distant from him. So I have become possessed with a curiosity to see in close view this living chrysalis, and to watch the game it plays from the bottom of its shell with that other chrysalis, by pulling, one after the other, some bits of string."

"And are you going there?"

"I am."

"What telegraph station do you intend visiting, — that of the home department or of the Observatory?"

"Oh, no! I should find there people who would force me to understand things of which I prefer to remain ignorant, and who would try to explain to me in spite of myself a mystery which even they do not understand. No, indeed! I wish to preserve unimpaired my illusions concerning insects; it is quite enough to have those dissipated which I had formed of my fellow-creatures. I shall therefore not visit either the telegraph office of the home department or that of the Observatory. What I want to find is a station in the open country, where I shall have to do with some unsophisticated fellow frozen to his tower."

"You are a singular man," said Villefort.

"What line would you advise me to study?"

"That which is most in use just at this time."

"The Spanish, you mean?"

"Yes; should you like a letter to the minister, that they might explain to you?"

"No," said Monte Cristo; "since, as I told you before, I do not wish to comprehend it. The moment I understand it there will no longer exist a telegraph for me; it will be nothing more than a signal from M. Duchâtel, or from M. Montalivet, transmitted to the prefect of Bayonne, mystified by two Greek words, τῆλε γράφειν. I wish to retain all my veneration for the insect with black claws and the terrible name."

"Go, then; for in the course of two hours it will be dark, and you will not be able to see anything."

"The devil! you alarm me! Which is the nearest station?"

"On the road to Bayonne?"

"Yes; the road to Bayonne."

"It is the one at Châtillon."

"And beyond the one at Châtillon?"

"At the tower of Montlhéry, I think."

"Thank you. Good-by. On Saturday I will give you my impressions."

At the door the count was met by the two notaries, who had just completed the act which was to disinherit Valentine, and who were leaving under the conviction of having done a thing which could not fail of redounding considerably to their credit.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOW TO GET RID OF DORMICE.

Not on the same evening, as he had said he should, but the next morning, the Count of Monte Cristo went out by the Barrier d'Enfer, taking the road to Orléans. Leaving the village of Linas without stopping at the telegraph station, whence radiated skeleton arms, he reached the tower of Montlhéry, situated, as every one knows, upon the highest point of the plain of that name. At the foot of the hill the count dismounted and began to ascend the mountain by a little winding path, about eighteen inches wide; when he reached the summit he found himself stopped by a hedge, upon which green fruit had succeeded to red and white flowers.

Monte Cristo looked for the door of the enclosure, and was not long in finding it. It was a little wooden gate, working on willow hinges, and fastened with a nail and string. The count soon understood its mechanism; and the door opened. He then found himself in a little garden, about twenty feet long by twelve wide, bounded on one side by part of the hedge in which was formed the ingenious machine which we have described as a door, and on the other by the old tower, covered with ivy and studded with wild flowers. No one would have thought on seeing it thus wrinkled and adorned, like an old lady whose grandchildren come to greet her on her birthday, that it could have related terrible tragedies if it could have added a voice to the menacing ears which an old

proverb assigns to walls. The garden was crossed by a path of red gravel, edged by a border of thick box of many years' growth, and of a tone and color that would have delighted the heart of Delacroix, our modern Rubens. This path was formed in the shape of the figure 8, thus in its windings making a walk of sixty feet in a garden only twenty feet in length. Never had Flora, the fresh and smiling goddess of gardeners, been honored with a purer or more minute worship than that which was paid to her in this little enclosure. In fact, of the twenty rose-trees which formed the *parterre*, not one bore the mark of the fly, nor were there to be seen any of those clusters of green insects which destroy plants growing in a damp soil. And yet it was not because the damp had been excluded from the garden. The earth, black as soot, and the thick foliage of the trees manifested its presence; besides, had natural humidity been wanting, it could have been immediately supplied by artificial means, thanks to a tank of water sunk in one of the corners of the garden, and upon which were stationed a frog and a toad, who, from antipathy, no doubt, always remained on the two opposite sides of the basin. There was not a blade of grass to be seen in the paths, nor a weed in the flower-beds; no fine lady ever trained and watered her geraniums, her cactus, and her rhododendrons with more pains than this gardener, as yet invisible, bestowed upon his little enclosure. Monte Cristo stopped after having closed the door and fastened the string to the nail, and cast a look around.

"The telegraph man," said he, "must either employ gardeners or devote himself passionately to agriculture." Suddenly he stumbled against something crouching behind a wheel-barrow filled with leaves. The something rose, uttering an exclamation of astonishment; and Monte Cristo found himself facing a man about fifty years old, who was

plucking strawberries, which he was placing upon vine-leaves. He had twelve leaves and about as many strawberries, which, on rising suddenly, he let fall from his hand.

"You are gathering your crop, Monsieur?" said Monte Cristo, smiling.

"Excuse me, Monsieur," replied the man, raising his hand to his cap; "I am not up there, I know, but I have only just come down."

"Do not let me interfere with you in anyth g, my friend," said the count; "gather your strawberries, if indeed there are any left."

"I have ten left," said the man, "for here are eleven; and I had twenty-one, five more than last year. But I am not surprised; the spring has been warm this year, and strawberries require heat, Monsieur. This is the reason that instead of the sixteen I had last year, I have this year, you see, eleven already plucked, — twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen. Ah, I miss three! they were here last night, Monsieur. I am sure they were here, — I counted them. It must be the son of Mère Simon who has stolen them; I saw him strolling about here this morning. Ah, the young rascal! stealing in a garden! — he does not know where that may lead him."

"It is indeed a serious affair," said Monte Cristo; "but you should take into consideration the youth and appetite of the delinquent."

"Of course," said the gardener; "but that does not make it the less unpleasant. But, Monsieur, once more I beg pardon; perhaps you are an officer whom I am detaining here?" And he glanced timidly at the count's blue coat.

"Calm yourself, my friend," said the count, with that smile which at his will became so terrible or benevolent, and which this time beamed only with the latter expres-

sion; "I am not an inspector, but a traveller, brought hither by curiosity. I begin to regret my visit, since it causes you to lose your time."

"Ah! my time is not valuable," replied the man, with a melancholy smile. "Still, it belongs to Government, and I ought not to waste it; but having received the signal that I might rest for an hour" (here he glanced at the sun-dial, for there was everything in the enclosure of Montlhéry, even a sun-dial), "and having ten minutes before me, and my strawberries being ripe, when a day longer — by the way, Monsieur, do you think dormice eat them?"

"Indeed, I should think not," replied Monte Cristo, gravely; "dormice, Monsieur, are bad neighbors for us who do not eat them preserved in honey, as the Romans did."

"What! did the Romans eat them?" said the gardener, — "eat dormice?"

"I have read so in Petronius," said the count.

"Really! They can't be nice, though they do say 'as fat as a dormouse.' It is not a wonder that they are fat, sleeping all day and waking only that they may eat all night. Listen! Last year I had four apricots; they stole one. I had one nectarine, only one — well, Monsieur, they ate half of it on the wall; a splendid nectarine, I never ate a better."

"You ate it?"

"That is to say, the half that was left, you understand; it was exquisite, Monsieur. Ah, those gentlemen never choose the worst morsels, — like Mère Simon's son, who has not chosen the worst strawberries. But this next year," continued the horticulturist, "I 'll take care it shall not happen, even if I sit up the whole night to watch when the strawberries are nearly ripe."

Monte Cristo had seen enough. Every man has a devouring passion in his heart, as every fruit has its worm; that of the telegraph man was horticulture. He began to pluck the vine-leaves which screened the sun from the grapes, and won the heart of the gardener.

"Did you come here, Monsieur, to see the telegraph?" he said.

"Yes, if it be not contrary to the rules."

"Oh, no," said the gardener; "there are no orders against it, and there is no danger in it, since no one knows and no one can know what we are saying."

"I have been told," said the count, "that you do not always yourselves understand the signals you repeat."

"Certainly, Monsieur; and that is what I like best," said the man, smiling.

"Why do you like that best?"

"Because then I have no responsibility. I am a machine then, and nothing else; and so long as I perform my duties, nothing more is required of me."

"Is it possible," said Monte Cristo to himself, "that I can have met with a man who has no ambition? That would spoil my plans."

"Monsieur," said the gardener, glancing at the sun-dial, "the ten minutes are nearly expired; I must return to my post. Will you go up with me?"

"I follow you."

Monte Cristo entered the tower, which was divided into three stories. The lowest contained gardening implements, such as spades, rakes, watering-pots, hung against the wall; this was all the furniture. The second was the usual dwelling, or rather sleeping place of the man; it contained a few poor articles of household furniture, — a bed, a table, two chairs, a stone pitcher, and some dry herbs hung up to the ceiling, which the count recognized as sweet peas,

and of which the good man was preserving the seeds, having labelled them with as much care as if he had been master botanist in the Jardin des Plantes.

"Does it require much study to learn the art of telegraphing, Monsieur?" asked Monte Cristo.

"The study does not take long; it was acting as a supernumerary that was so tedious."

"And what is the pay?"

"A thousand livres, Monsieur."

"It is very little."

"Yes; but then we are lodged, as you perceive."

Monte Cristo looked at the room. "It is to be hoped that he will not cling to his lodging!" he murmured.

They passed on to the third story; it was the room of the telegraph. Monte Cristo looked in turns at the two iron handles by which the machine was worked. "It is very interesting," he said; "but in the long run it is a life which must be very tedious to you."

"Yes. At first the continual watching gave me a crick in the neck, but at the end of a year I became used to it; and then we have our hours of recreation and our holidays."

"Holidays?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"When we have a fog."

"Ah, to be sure."

"Those are indeed holidays to me. I go into the garden; I plant, I prune, I trim, I kill the insects all day long."

"How long have you been here?"

"Ten years and five as a supernumerary make fifteen."

"You are —"

"Fifty-five years old."

"How long must you have served to claim the pension?"

"Oh, Monsieur, twenty-five years."

"And how much is the pension?"

"A hundred crowns."

"Poor humanity!" murmured Monte Cristo.

"What did you say, Monsieur?" asked the man.

"I said it is very interesting."

"What is?"

"Everything you are showing me. And you really understand none of these signals?"

"None at all."

"And have you never tried to understand them?"

"Never. Why should I?"

"But still there are some signals addressed only to you."

"Certainly."

"And do you understand them?"

"They are always the same."

"And they mean —"

"'Nothing new;' 'You have an hour;' or 'To-morrow.'"

"This is simple enough," said the count; "but look! is not your correspondent making signals?"

"Ah, yes; thank you, Monsieur."

"And what is he saying, — anything which you can understand?"

"Yes; he asks if I am ready."

"And you reply?"

"By a signal which tells my right-hand correspondent that I am ready, while it gives notice to my left-hand correspondent to prepare in his turn."

"It is very ingenious," said the count.

"You will see," said the man, proudly; "in five minutes he will speak."

"I have, then, five minutes," said Monte Cristo to himself; "it is more time than I require. My dear Monsieur, will you allow me to ask you a question?"

"What is it, Monsieur?"

"You are fond of gardening?"

"Passionately."

"And you would be pleased to have, instead of this terrace of twenty feet, an enclosure of two acres?"

"Monsieur, I should make a terrestrial paradise of it."

"You live badly on your thousand livres?"

"Badly enough, but yet live."

"Yes; but you have only a wretched garden!"

"True, the garden is not large."

"And then, such as it is, it is filled with dormice, who eat everything."

"Ah! they are my scourges."

"Tell me, should you have the misfortune to turn your head while your right-hand correspondent is telegraphing —"

"I should not see anything."

"Then what would happen?"

"I could not repeat the signals."

"And then?"

"Not having repeated them through negligence, I should be fined."

"How much?"

"A hundred livres."

"The tenth of your income; that would be a pretty business!"

"Ah!" said the man.

"Has it ever happened to you?" said Monte Cristo.

"Once, sir, when I was grafting a rose-tree."

"Well, suppose you were to alter a signal and substitute another?"

"Ah, that is another case; I should be turned off and lose my pension."

"Three hundred livres?"

"A hundred crowns, yes, Monsieur; so you see that I am not likely to do anything of the kind."

"Not even for fifteen years' wages? Come, it is worth thinking about, eh?"

"For fifteen thousand livres?"

"Yes."

"Monsieur, you alarm me."

"Nonsense."

"Monsieur, you are tempting me."

"Just so; fifteen thousand livres, do you understand?"

"Monsieur, let me see my right-hand correspondent now!"

"On the contrary, do not look at him, but on this."

"What is it?"

"What! do you not know these little papers?"

"Bank-notes!"

"Exactly; there are fifteen of them."

"And whose are they?"

"Yours, if you like."

"Mine!" exclaimed the man, half-suffocated.

"Yes; yours, — your own property."

"Monsieur, my right-hand correspondent is signalling."

"Let him signal."

"Monsieur, you have distracted me; I shall be fined."

"That will cost you a hundred livres; you see it is your interest to take my bank-notes."

"Monsieur, my right-hand correspondent redoubles his signals; he is impatient."

"Never mind, take these;" and the count placed the packet in the hands of the man. "Now this is not all," he said; "you cannot live upon your fifteen thousand livres."

"I shall still have my place."

"No; you will lose it, for you are going to alter the signals of your correspondent."

"Oh, Monsieur, what are you proposing?"

"A jest."

"Monsieur, unless you force me—"

"I intend to force you effectually;" and Monte Cristo drew another packet from his pocket. "Here are ten thousand more livres," he said; "with the fifteen thousand already in your pocket, they will make twenty-five thousand. With five thousand you can buy a pretty little house with two acres of land; the remaining twenty thousand will bring you in a thousand livres a year."

"A garden with two acres of land!"

"And a thousand livres a year."

"Oh, heavens!"

"Come, take them!" and Monte Cristo forced the bank-notes into his hand.

"What am I to do?"

"Nothing very difficult."

"But what is it?"

"To repeat these signals." Monte Cristo took a paper from his pocket, upon which were drawn three signals, with numbers to indicate the order in which they were to be sent.

"There, you see it will not take long."

"Yes; but—"

"Do this, and you will have nectarines and all the rest."

The mark was hit; red with fever, while large drops fell from his brow, the man executed, one after the other, the three signals given by the count, notwithstanding the frantic excitement displayed by the right-hand correspondent, who, not understanding the change, began to think the gardener had become mad. As to the left-hand correspondent, he conscientiously repeated the same signals,

which were faithfully forwarded to the Minister of the Interior.

"Now you are rich," said Monte Cristo.

"Yes," replied the man; "but at what a price!"

"Listen, my friend," said Monte Cristo. "I do not wish to cause you any remorse; believe me, then, when I swear to you that you have done no one any wrong, and you have served the designs of Providence."

The man looked at the bank-notes, felt them, counted them; he turned pale, then red, then rushed into his room to drink a glass of water, but before reaching the water-jug, he fainted in the midst of his dried herbs.

Five minutes after the new telegram reached the minister, Debray had the horses put to his carriage, and hastened to Danglars's mansion.

"Has your husband any Spanish bonds?" he asked of the baroness.

"I think so, indeed! He has six millions' worth."

"He must sell them, at any price."

"Why?"

"Because Don Carlos has fled from Bourges, and has returned to Spain."

"How do you know?"

Debray shrugged his shoulders. "The idea of asking how I hear the news!" he said.

The baroness did not wait for a repetition; she ran to her husband, who immediately hastened to his agent and ordered him to sell at any price. When it was seen that Danglars sold, the Spanish funds fell directly. Danglars lost five hundred thousand livres; but he rid himself of all his Spanish shares. The same evening the following was read in "Le Messager:—

"*Telegraphic despatch.* — The king, Don Carlos, has escaped the vigilance exercised over him at Bourges, and has returned

to Spain by the Catalonian frontier. Barcelona has risen in his favor."

All that evening nothing was spoken of but the foresight of Danglars, who had sold his shares, and of the luck of the stock-jobber, who had lost only five hundred thousand livres by such a blow. Those who had kept their shares, or bought those of Danglars, considered themselves as ruined, and passed a very bad night.

Next morning "Le Moniteur" contained the following:

"It was without any foundation that 'Le Messager' yesterday announced the flight of Don Carlos and the revolt of Barcelona. The king, Don Carlos, has not left Bourges, and the peninsula is in the enjoyment of profound peace. A telegraphic signal improperly interpreted, owing to the fog, was the cause of this error."

The funds rose by double the amount of the fall. This, reckoning his loss and what he had missed gaining, made the difference of a million to Danglars.

"Good!" said Monte Cristo to Morrel, who was at his house when the news arrived of the strange reverse of fortune of which Danglars had been the victim; "I have just made a discovery for twenty-five thousand livres for which I would have paid a hundred thousand."

"What have you discovered?" asked Morrel.

"I have just discovered the method of ridding a gardener of the dormice that eat his peaches."

CHAPTER XXV.

GHOSTS.

At first sight the exterior of the house at Auteuil presented nothing splendid, nothing one would expect to see in the residence of the magnificent Count of Monte Cristo. But this simplicity was but according to the will of its master, who had positively ordered nothing to be altered outside, — as was apparent to any one observing the interior. In fact, as soon as the door was opened, the scene changed. M. Bertuccio had outdone himself in the taste displayed in the furnishing, and in the rapidity with which it was executed. As formerly the Duc d'Antin had in a single night caused a whole avenue of trees to be cut down that annoyed Louis XIV., so in three days had M. Bertuccio planted an entirely bare court with poplars, large, spreading sycamores shading the different parts of the house, before which, instead of the usual paving-stones half hidden by the grass, there extended a turf lawn but that morning laid down, and upon which the water was yet glistening. For the rest, the orders had been issued by the count; he himself had given a plan to Bertuccio, marking the spot where each tree was to be planted, and the shape and ex-

tent of the lawn which was to succeed the paving-stones. Thus the house had become unrecognizable; and Bertuccio himself declared that he scarcely knew it, encircled as it was by a framework of trees. The steward would not have objected, while he was about it, to have made some improvements in the garden; but the count had positively forbidden it to be touched. Bertuccio made amends, however, by loading the ante-chambers, staircases, and chimneys with flowers. What especially exhibited the skill of the steward and the profound science of the master — the one in service, the other in directing service — was that this house, which appeared only the night before so sad and gloomy, impregnated with that sickly smell one can almost fancy to be the smell of time, had in one day acquired the aspect of life, was scented with its master's favorite perfumes, and had the very light regulated according to his wish. When the count arrived, he had under his touch his books and arms; his eyes rested upon his favorite pictures; his dogs whose caresses he loved welcomed him in the ante-chamber; the birds whose songs delighted him cheered him with their music; and the house, awakened from its long sleep, like the palace of the Sleeping Beauty in the wood, lived, sang, and bloomed like the houses we have long cherished, and in which when we are forced to leave them we leave a part of our souls. The servants passed gayly along the fine courtyard; some, belonging to the kitchens, glided down the stairs, restored but the previous day, as if they had always inhabited the house; others occupied the coach-houses, where the equipages, encased and numbered, appeared to have been installed for the last fifty years; and in the stables the horses replied by neighing to the grooms, who spoke to them with much more respect than many servants pay their masters.

The library was divided into two parts on two sides of the room and contained upwards of two thousand volumes. One division was entirely devoted to modern romances; and even the one which had been published but the day before was to be seen in its place in all the dignity of its red and gold binding. On the other side of the house, corresponding with the library was the conservatory, ornamented with rare flowers blossoming in china jars; and in the midst of the greenhouse, marvellous alike to sight and smell, was a billiard-table apparently abandoned during the last hour by the players who had left the balls on the cloth. One chamber alone had been respected by the magnificent Bertuccio. Before this room, situated in the left-hand corner of the first story, to which ascent was made by the grand staircase, and from which there was egress by the secret staircase, the servants passed with curiosity, and Bertuccio with terror. At five o'clock precisely, the count arrived before the house at Auteuil, followed by Ali. Bertuccio was awaiting this arrival with impatience mingled with uneasiness; he hoped for some compliments, while at the same time he feared to encounter frowns. Monte Cristo descended from his carriage in the courtyard, went everywhere through the house and took a turn in the garden, silent and giving no sign either of approbation or displeasure. But on entering his bedroom, opposite the closed chamber, he extended his hand towards the drawer of a small rosewood table which he had noticed on his first visit to the house, "That will at least serve to put my gloves in," he said.

"Will your Excellency deign to open it?" said the delighted Bertuccio; "you will find gloves in it."

In other articles of furniture the count found everything he required, — smelling-bottles, cigars, *bijouterie*. "Good!" he said; and M. Bertuccio withdrew enraptured, — so great,

so powerful was the influence exercised by this man over all who surrounded him.

At precisely six o'clock the clatter of horses' hoofs was heard at the entrance door; it was our captain of Spahis, who had arrived on Medea. Monte Cristo awaited him at the entrance with a smile on his lips.

"I am sure I am the first," cried Morrel; "I did it on purpose to have you a minute to myself before every one came. Julie and Emmanuel have a thousand things to tell you. Ah! really this is magnificent! But tell me, Count, will your people take care of my horse?"

"Do not alarm yourself, my dear Maximilian; they understand."

"I mean because he wants petting. If you had seen at what a pace he came, — like the wind!"

"I should think so, — a horse that cost five thousand livres!" said Monte Cristo, in the tone which a father would use towards a son.

"Do you regret them?" asked Morrel, with his open laugh.

"I? Certainly not!" replied the count. "No; I should only regret if the horse had not proved good."

"It is so good that I have distanced M. de Château-Renaud, one of the best riders in France, and M. Debray, who both mount the minister's Arabians; and close at their heels are the horses of Madame Danglars, who always go at six leagues an hour."

"Then they follow you?" asked Monte Cristo.

"See! they are here!" And at the same minute a carriage with smoking horses, accompanied by two mounted gentlemen, arrived at the gate, which opened before them. The carriage drove round and stopped at the steps, followed by the horsemen. The instant Debray had touched the ground, he was at the carriage-door. He offered his

hand to the baroness, who, descending, took it with a peculiarity of manner imperceptible to every one but Monte Cristo. But nothing escaped the count's notice; and he observed a little note slipped with an indescribable ease, bespeaking the frequent practice of this manœuvre, from the hand of Madame Danglars to that of the minister's secretary. After his wife the banker descended, pale as though he had issued from his tomb instead of his carriage. Madame Danglars threw a rapid and inquiring glance around, which could be interpreted by Monte Cristo alone, embracing the courtyard, the peristyle, and the front of the house; then, repressing a slight emotion, which must have been seen on her countenance if she had permitted her face to become pale, she ascended the steps, saying to Morrel, "Monsieur, if you were a friend of mine I should ask you if you would sell your horse."

Morrel smiled with an expression very like a grimace, and then turned round to Monte Cristo as if to ask him to extricate him from his embarrassment. The count understood him. "Ah, Madame!" he said, "why did you not make that request of me?"

"With you, Monsieur," replied the baroness, "one can wish for nothing, one is so sure to obtain it. If it were so with M. Morrel —"

"Unfortunately," replied the count, "I am witness that M. Morrel cannot give up his horse, his honor being engaged in keeping it."

"How so?"

"He laid a wager he would tame Medea in the space of six months. You understand now that if he were to get rid of it before the time named, he would not only lose his bet, but people would say he was afraid; and a brave captain of Spahis cannot risk this, even to gratify a pretty

woman, which is in my opinion one of the most sacred obligations in the world."

"You see my position, Madame," said Morrel, bestowing a grateful smile on Monte Cristo.

"It seems to me," said Danglars, in his coarse tone, ill-concealed by a forced smile, "that you have already got horses enough."

Madame Danglars seldom allowed remarks of this kind to pass unnoticed; but to the surprise of the young people she pretended not to hear it, and said nothing. Monte Cristo smiled at her unusual humility, and showed her two immense porcelain jars, covered with marine plants of a size and delicacy that could be produced only by nature. The baroness was astonished. "Why," said she, "you could plant one of the chestnut-trees in the Tuileries in one of those! How can such enormous jars have been manufactured?"

"Ah, Madame!" replied Monte Cristo, "you must not ask of us, the manufacturers of statuettes and of glass-muslin, such a question. It is the work of another age, constructed by the genii of earth and water."

"How so? At what period can that have been?"

"I do not know; I have only heard that an emperor of China had an oven built, and that in this oven twelve jars like this were successively baked. Two broke, from the heat of the fire; the other ten were sunk three hundred fathoms deep into the sea. The sea, knowing what was required of her, threw over them her weeds, encircled them with coral, and encrusted them with shells; the whole was cemented by remaining two hundred years beneath these almost impervious depths, — for a revolution carried away the emperor who wished to make the trial, and only left the documents proving the manufacture of the jars and their descent into the sea. At the end of two hundred

years the documents were found; and they thought of bringing up the jars. Divers descended in machines, made expressly on the discovery, into the bay where they were thrown; but of ten three only remained, the rest having been broken by the waves. I am fond of these jars, upon which perhaps misshapen, frightful monsters have fixed their cold dull eyes, and in which myriads of small fish have slept, seeking a refuge from the pursuit of their enemies."

Meanwhile Danglars, who cared little for curiosities, was mechanically tearing off the blossoms of a splendid orange-tree one after another. When he had finished with the orange-tree he began at the cactus; but this, not being so easily plucked as the orange-tree, pricked him dreadfully. He shuddered, and rubbed his eyes as though awaking from a dream.

"Monsieur," said Monte Cristo to him, "I do not recommend my pictures to you who possess such splendid paintings; but nevertheless here are two by Hobbema, a Paul Potter, a Mieris, two by Gerard Douw, a Raphael, a Vandyke, a Zurbaran, and two or three Murillos worth looking at."

"Stay!" said Debray; "I recognize this Hobbema."

"Ah, indeed!"

"Yes; it was proposed for the Museum."

"Which, I believe, does not contain one?" said Monte Cristo.

"No; and yet they refused to buy it."

"Why?" said Château-Renaud.

"You pretend not to know; because Government was not rich enough."

"Ah, pardon me!" said Château-Renaud; "I have heard of these things every day during the last eight years, and I cannot understand them yet."

"You will by and by," said Debray.

"I think not," replied Château-Renaud.

"Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti and Vicomte Andrea Cavalcanti!" announced Baptistin.

A black satin stock, fresh from the maker's hands, gray mustaches, a bold eye, a major's uniform ornamented with three medals and five crosses — in fact, the thorough bearing of an old soldier — such was the appearance of Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti, that tender father with whom we are already acquainted. Close to him, dressed in entirely new clothes, advanced smilingly Vicomte Andrea Cavalcanti, the dutiful son, whom we also know. The three young men were talking together. On the entrance of the newcomers their eyes glanced from father to son, and then naturally enough rested on the latter, whom they began criticising.

"Cavalcanti!" said Debray.

"A fine name!" said Morrel.

"Yes," said Château-Renaud; "these Italians are well named and badly dressed."

"You are fastidious, Château-Renaud," replied Debray; "those clothes are well cut and quite new."

"That is just what I find fault with. That gentleman appears to be well dressed for the first time in his life."

"Who are those gentlemen?" asked Danglars of Monte Cristo.

"You heard, — Cavalcanti."

"That tells me their name and nothing else."

"Ah, true! You do not know the Italian nobility; the Cavalcanti are all descended from princes."

"Have they any fortune?"

"An enormous one."

"What do they do?"

"They try to spend it all. They have some business

with you, I think, from what they told me the day before yesterday. I indeed invited them here to-day on your account. I will introduce you to them."

"But they appear to speak French with a very pure accent," said Danglars.

"The son has been educated in a college in the South, — in Marseilles, I believe, or in that neighborhood. You will find him quite enthusiastic."

"Upon what subject?" asked Madame Danglars.

"The French ladies, Madame. He has made up his mind to take a wife from Paris."

"A fine idea, that of his!" said Danglars, shrugging his shoulders.

Madame Danglars looked at her husband with an expression which at any other time would have indicated a storm, but for the second time she controlled herself.

"The baron appears thoughtful to-day," said Monte Cristo to her; "are they going to put him in the ministry?"

"Not yet, I think. More likely he has been speculating on the Bourse and has lost money."

"Monsieur and Madame de Villefort!" cried Baptistin.

The two persons thus announced entered. M. de Villefort, notwithstanding his self-control, was visibly affected; and when Monte Cristo touched his hand he perceived that it trembled. "Certainly, women alone know how to dissimulate," said he to himself, glancing at Madame Danglars, who was smiling on the *procureur du roi* and embracing his wife. After a short time the count saw Bertuccio, who until then had been occupied on the other side of the house, glide into an adjoining room. He went to him. "What do you want, M. Bertuccio?" said he.

"Your Excellency has not stated the number of guests."

"Ah, true!"

"How many covers?"

"Count for yourself."

"Is every one here, your Excellency?"

"Yes."

Bertuccio glanced through the door, which was ajar. The count watched him. "Good heavens!" he exclaimed.

"What is the matter?" said the count.

"That woman! that woman!"

"Which?"

"The one with a white dress and so many diamonds, — the fair one."

"Madame Danglars?"

"I do not know her name; but it is she, Monsieur, it is she!"

"Whom do you mean?"

"The woman of the garden! — she that was *enceinte* — she who was walking while she waited for — " Bertuccio stood at the open door, with his eyes starting and his hair on end.

"Waiting for whom?"

Bertuccio, without answering, pointed to Villefort almost with the gesture which Macbeth used to point out Banquo. "Oh, oh!" he at length muttered, "do you see?"

"What? Who?"

"Him!"

"Him! M. de Villefort, the *procureur du roi*? Certainly I see him."

"Then I did not kill him!"

"Really, I think you are going mad, good Bertuccio," said the count.

"Then he is not dead!"

"No; you see plainly he is not dead. Instead of striking between the sixth and seventh left ribs, as your countrymen do, you must have struck higher or lower; and life is

very tenacious in these lawyers, — or rather there is no truth in anything you have told me; it was a flight of the imagination, a dream of your fancy. You went to sleep full of thoughts of vengeance; they weighed heavily upon your stomach, — you had the nightmare, that's all. Come, calm yourself, and reckon: Monsieur and Madame de Villefort, two; Monsieur and Madame Danglars, four; M. de Château-Renaud, M. Debray, M. Morrel, seven; Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti, eight."

"Eight!" repeated Bertuccio.

"Stop! You are in a shocking hurry to be off; you forget one of my guests. Lean a little to the left. Stay! look at M. Andrea Cavalcanti, that young man in a black coat, looking at Murillo's Madonna; now he is turning."

This time Bertuccio would have uttered an exclamation had not a look from Monte Cristo silenced him. "Benedetto!" he muttered; "fatality!"

"Half-past six o'clock has just struck, M. Bertuccio," said the count, severely; "I ordered dinner at that hour, and I do not like to wait;" and he returned to his guests, while Bertuccio, leaning against the walls, succeeded in reaching the dining-room. Five minutes afterwards the doors of the drawing-room were thrown open, and Bertuccio, appearing, said with a violent effort, "Monsieur the Count is served."

The Count of Monte Cristo offered his arm to Madame de Villefort. "M. de Villefort," he said, "will you conduct the Baronne Danglars?"

Villefort complied, and they passed on to the dining room.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DINNER.

It was evident that one sentiment animated all of the guests on entering the dining-room. Each one asked himself what strange influence had conducted them to this house; and yet astonished, even uneasy though they were, they still felt they would not like to be absent. Though the recent date of the count's social relations, his eccentric and isolated position, his astounding and almost fabulous fortune should have suggested to the men the duty of circumspection, and to the women the impropriety of entering a house where there were no women to receive them, men and women broke the bounds of caution and conventionality; and curiosity, urging with its irresistible spur, triumphed over everything. Even Cavalcanti and his son — the one in spite of his stiffness, the other in spite of his recklessness — seemed preoccupied on finding themselves in the house of this man whose purposes they could not comprehend, brought into association with other men whom they then saw for the first time. Madame Danglars had started when Villefort, on the count's invitation, offered his arm; and Villefort felt that his glance was uneasy beneath his gold spectacles, when he felt the arm of the baroness press upon his own. Nothing of this had escaped the count; and even by this mere contact of individuals the scene had already acquired considerable interest for an observer. M. de Villefort had on the right hand Madame Danglars, on his left Morrel. The count was seated be-

tween Madame de Villefort and Danglars; the other seats were filled by Debray, who was placed between the two Cavalcanti, and by Château-Renaud, seated between Madame de Villefort and Morrel.

The repast was magnificent; Monte Cristo had endeavored completely to overturn the Parisian symmetry, and to feed the curiosity rather than the appetite of his guests. It was an Oriental feast that he offered to them, but Oriental in the way that feasts of Arabian fairies might be. Every delicious fruit that the four quarters of the globe could provide was heaped in vases from China and jars from Japan. Rare birds, retaining their most brilliant plumage; enormous fish, spread upon massive silver dishes; together with every wine produced in the Archipelago, Asia Minor, or the Cape, sparkling in bottles whose grotesque shape seemed to give an additional flavor to the wine, —all these, like one of those displays with which Apicius of old gratified his guests, passed in review before the eyes of the Parisians, who understood that it was possible to expend one thousand louis upon a dinner for ten persons, but only on the condition of eating pearls, like Cleopatra, or drinking beaten gold, like Lorenzo de Medici. Monte Cristo noticed the general astonishment, and began laughing and joking about it. "Gentlemen," he said, "you will admit that when one has arrived at a certain degree of fortune the superfluities of life are the only necessities; and the ladies will allow that after having risen to a certain eminence of position the ideal alone can be more exalted. Now, to follow out this reasoning, what is the marvellous? That which we do not understand. What is it that we really desire? That which we cannot obtain. Now, to see things which I cannot understand, to procure impossibilities, these are the study of my life. I gratify my wishes by two means, — my will and my money. I take

as much interest in the pursuit of some whim as you do, M. Danglars, in forming a new railway line; you, M. de Villefort, in condemning a culprit to death; you, M. Debray, in pacifying a kingdom; you, M. de Château-Renaud, in pleasing a woman; and you, Morrel, in breaking a horse that no one can ride. For example, you see these two fish, — one brought from fifty leagues beyond St. Petersburg, the other from within five leagues of Naples. Is it not amusing to see them both on the same table?"

"What are the two fish?" asked Danglars.

"M. de Château-Renaud, who has lived in Russia, will tell you the name of one," replied Monte Cristo; "and Major Cavalcanti, who is an Italian, will tell you the name of the other."

"This one is, I think, a sterlet," said Château-Renaud.

"And that one," said Cavalcanti, "is, if I mistake not, a lamprey."

"Just so. Now, M. Danglars, ask these gentlemen where they are caught."

"Sterlets," said Château-Renaud, "are found only in the Volga."

"And," said Cavalcanti, "I know that Lake Fusaro alone supplies lampreys of that size."

"Exactly; one comes from the Volga, and the other from Lake Fusaro."

"Impossible!" cried all the guests simultaneously.

"Well, this is just what amuses me," said Monte Cristo. "I am like Nero, — *cupitor impossibilium;* and that it is which is amusing you at this moment. This fish, which very likely is no better than perch or salmon, seems exquisite to you because it seemed impossible to procure it, and yet it is here."

"But how could you have these fish brought to France?"

"Oh, nothing more easy: ah fish was brought over

in a cask, — one filled with river herbs and weeds, the other with rushes and lake plants; they were placed in a wagon built on purpose. And thus the sterlet lived twelve days, the lamprey eight; and both were alive when my cook seized them, killing one with milk, and the other with wine. You do not believe me, M. Danglars!"

"I cannot help doubting," answered Danglars, with his stupid smile.

"Baptistin," said the count, "have the other fish brought in, — the sterlet and the lamprey which came in the other casks, and which are yet alive." Danglars opened his bewildered eyes; the company clapped their hands. Four servants carried in two casks covered with aquatic plants, and in each of which was breathing a fish similar to those on the table.

"But why have two of each sort?" asked Danglars.

"Merely because one might die," carelessly answered Monte Cristo.

"You are certainly an extraordinary man," said Danglars; "and philosophers may well say it is a fine thing to be rich."

"And to have ideas," added Madame Danglars.

"Oh, do not give me credit on that score, Madame; it was a practice much in vogue among the Romans. Pliny relates that they sent slaves from Ostia to Rome, who carried on their heads fish of the species which he calls the *mulus*, and which from the description was probably the gold-fish. It was also considered a luxury to have them alive, it being an amusing sight to see them die, — for when dying they change color three or four times, and like the rainbow when it disappears, pass through all the prismatic shades; after that they were sent to the kitchen. Their agony formed part of their merit; if they were not seen alive, they were despised when dead."

"Yes," said Debray; "but then Ostia is only a few leagues from Rome."

"True," said Monte Cristo; "but what would be the use of living eighteen hundred years after Lucullus, if we can do no better than he could?"

The two Cavalcanti opened their eyes, but had the good sense not to say anything.

"All this is very extraordinary," said Château-Renaud; "still, what I admire the most, I confess, is the marvellous promptitude with which your orders are executed. Is it not true that you bought this house only five or six days ago?"

"Certainly not longer."

"Well, I am sure it is quite transformed since last week. If I remember rightly, it had another entrance, and the courtyard was paved and empty; while to-day we have a splendid lawn, bordered by trees which appear to be a hundred years old."

"Why not? I am fond of grass and shade," said Monte Cristo.

"Yes," said Madame de Villefort; "the door was towards the road before. And on the day of my miraculous escape you brought me into the house from the road, I remember."

"Yes, Madame," said Monte Cristo; "but I preferred having an entrance which would allow me to see the Bois de Boulogne over my gate."

"In four days!" said Morrel; "it is extraordinary!"

"Indeed," said Château-Renaud, "to make a new house out of an old one is a wonderful achievement; this house was very old, and dull too. I recollect coming for my mother to look at it when M. de Saint-Méran advertised it for sale two or three years ago."

"M. de Saint-Méran!" said Madame de Villefort;

"then this house belonged to M. de Saint-Méran before you bought it?"

"It appears so," replied Monte Cristo.

"What! 'it appears?' Do you not know of whom you purchased it?"

"No, indeed; my steward transacts all this business for me."

"It is certainly ten years since the house had been occupied," said Château-Renaud; "and it was quite melancholy to look at it, with the blinds closed, the doors locked, and the weeds in the court. Really, if the house had not belonged to the father-in-law of the *procureur du roi*, one might have thought it some accursed place where a horrible crime had been committed."

Villefort, who had hitherto not tasted the three or four glasses of rare wine which were placed before him, here took one, and drank it off. Monte Cristo allowed a moment to elapse, and then said, "It is singular, Baron, but the same idea came to me the first time I entered the house; it looked so gloomy I should never have bought it if my steward had not acted for me. Perhaps the fellow had been bribed by the notary."

"It is probable," stammered out Villefort, trying to smile; "but believe me, I have nothing to do with that bribery. This house is part of the marriage-portion of Valentine; and M. de Saint-Méran wished to sell it, for if it had remained another year or two uninhabited, it would have fallen to ruin." It was Morrel's turn to become pale.

"There was especially one room," continued Monte Cristo, "very plain in appearance, hung with red damask, which, I know not why, appeared to me quite dramatic."

"Why so?" asked Debray; "why dramatic?"

an we account for instinct?" said Monte Cristo

"Are there not some places where we seem to breathe sadness? why, we cannot tell. A chain of recollections, an idea, carries you back to other times, to other places, which very likely have no connection with the time and place in which we are at the moment. And there is something in that chamber which reminds me forcibly of the chamber of the Marquise de Ganges or that of Desdemona. Stay! since we have finished dinner, I will show it to you; and then we will take coffee in the garden. After dinner, the spectacle."

Monte Cristo looked inquiringly at his guests. Madame de Villefort rose, Monte Cristo did the same, and the rest followed their example. Villefort and Madame Danglars remained for a moment as if rooted to their seats; they interrogated each other with cold, glazed eyes.

"Did you hear?" said Madame Danglars.

"We must go," replied Villefort, offering his arm.

All the others were already scattered in different parts of the house, urged by curiosity, — for they thought the visit would not be limited to the one room, and that at the same time they would obtain a view of the rest of the building which Monte Cristo had made into a palace. Each one went out by the open doors. Monte Cristo waited for the two who remained; then when they had passed, he closed the procession with a smile, which if they could have understood it would have alarmed them much more than a visit to the room they were about to enter. They began by walking through the apartments, many of which were fitted up in the Eastern style, with cushions and divans instead of beds, and pipes instead of furniture. The drawing-rooms were decorated with the rarest pictures by the old masters; the boudoirs hung with draperies from China, of fanciful colors, fantastic design, and [illegible] texture. At length they arrived at

the famous room. There was nothing particularly noticeable in it, except that although daylight had disappeared, it was not lighted, and everything in it remained antique, while the other rooms had been redecorated. These two causes were enough to give it a gloomy effect.

"Oh!" cried Madame de Villefort. "It is really frightful!"

Madame Danglars tried to utter a few words, but was not heard. Many observations were made, which expressed the unanimous opinion that the chamber had a sinister appearance.

"Is it not so?" asked Monte Cristo. "Look at that large clumsy bed, hung with that gloomy, blood-colored drapery! And those two crayon portraits, that have faded from the damp, do they not seem to say with their pale lips and staring eyes, 'We have seen'?"

Villefort became livid; Madame Danglars fell into a long seat placed near the chimney.

"Oh!" said Madame de Villefort, smiling, "are you courageous enough to sit down upon the very seat perhaps upon which the crime was committed?"

Madame Danglars rose suddenly.

"And then," said Monte Cristo, "this is not all."

"What is there more?" said Debray, who had not failed to notice the agitation of Madame Danglars.

"Ah! what else is there?" said Danglars; "for at present I cannot say that I have seen anything extraordinary. What do you say, M. Cavalcanti?"

"Ah!" said he, "we have at Pisa the tower of Ugolino; at Ferraro, the prison of Tasso; at Rimini, the room of Francesca and Paolo."

"Yes, but you have not this little staircase," said Monte Cristo, opening a door concealed by the drapery. "Look at it, and tell me what you think of it."

"What a wicked-looking crooked staircase," said M. de Château-Renaud, smiling.

"I do not know whether the wine of Chios produces melancholy, but certainly everything appears to me black in this house," said Debray.

Ever since Valentine's dowry had been mentioned, Morrel had been silent and sad.

"Can you imagine," said Monte Cristo, "some Othello or Abbé de Ganges, on a stormy, dark night, descending these stairs step by step, carrying a funereal burden, which he wishes to hide from the sight of man, if not from God?"

Madame Danglars half fainted on the arm of Villefort, who was obliged to support himself against the wall.

"Ah, Madame!" cried Debray, "what is the matter with you? How pale you look!"

"This is what is the matter with her," said Madame de Villefort; "it is very simple, — M. de Monte Cristo is relating horrible stories to us, doubtless intending to frighten us to death."

"Yes," said Villefort, "really, Count, you frighten the ladies."

"What is the matter?" asked Debray, in a whisper, of Madame Danglars.

"Nothing," she replied with a violent effort. "I want air! that is all."

"Will you come into the garden?" said Debray, advancing towards the back staircase.

"No, no!" she answered; "I would rather remain here."

"Are you really frightened, Madame?" said Monte Cristo.

"Oh, no, Monsieur," said Madame Danglars; "but you suppose scenes in a manner which gives them the appearance of reality."

"Ah, yes!" said Monte Cristo, smiling; "it is all a matter of the imagination. Why should we not imagine this the apartment of an honest family-woman; and this bed with red hangings, a bed visited by the goddess Lucina; and that mysterious staircase, the passage through which, not to disturb their sleep, the doctor and nurse pass, or even the father carrying the sleeping child?"

Here Madame Danglars, instead of being calmed by the pleasing picture, uttered a groan and fainted.

"Madame Danglars is ill," said Villefort; "it would be better to take her to her carriage."

"Oh! and I have forgotten my smelling-bottle!" said Monte Cristo.

"I have mine," said Madame de Villefort; and she passed over to Monte Cristo a bottle full of the same kind of red liquid whose good properties the count had tested on Édouard.

"Ah!" said Monte Cristo, taking it from her hand.

"Yes," she said, "at your advice I have tried."

"And have you succeeded?"

"I think so."

Madame Danglars was carried into the adjoining room; Monte Cristo dropped a very small portion of the red liquid upon her lips; she returned to consciousness. "Ah!" she cried, "what a frightful dream!"

Villefort pressed her hand to let her know it was not a dream. M. Danglars was sought, but little interested in poetical ideas, he had gone into the garden, and was talking with Major Cavalcanti on the projected railway from Leghorn to Florence. Monte Cristo seemed in despair. He took the arm of Madame Danglars, and conducted her into the garden, where they found Danglars taking coffee between the Cavalcanti. "Really, Madame," he said, "did I alarm you much?"

"Oh, no, Monsieur," she answered, "but you know things impress us differently, according to our different moods."

Villefort forced a laugh. "And sometimes, you know," he said, "an idea, a supposition, is sufficient."

"Well," said Monte Cristo, "you may believe me if you like, but it is my belief that a crime has been committed in this house."

"Take care!" said Madame de Villefort, "the *procureur du roi* is here."

"Ah!" replied Monte Cristo, "since that is the case I will take advantage of his presence to make my declaration."

"Your declaration!" said Villefort.

"Yes, before witnesses."

"Oh, this is very interesting," said Debray; "if there really has been a crime, we will investigate it."

"There has been a crime," said Monte Cristo. "Come this way, gentlemen; come, M. de Villefort, for a declaration to be available should be made before the competent authorities." He then took Villefort's arm, and at the same time holding that of Madame Danglars under his own, he dragged the *procureur* to the plantain-tree, where the shade was thickest. All the other guests followed. "Stay," said Monte Cristo, "here, in this very spot" (and he stamped upon the ground), "I had the earth dug up and fresh mould put in, to refresh these old trees; well, my man, digging, found a box, or rather the iron-work of a box, in the midst of which was the skeleton of a newly-born infant."

Monte Cristo felt the arm of Madame Danglars stiffen, while that of Villefort trembled.

"A newly-born infant!" repeated Debray; "the devil! the affair is becoming serious, it seems to me!"

"Well," said Château-Renaud, "I was not wrong just now, then, when I said that houses had souls and faces

like men, and that their exteriors carried the impress of their characters. This house was gloomy because it was remorseful; it was remorseful because it concealed a crime."

"Who said it was a crime?" asked Villefort, with a last effort.

"What! is it not a crime to bury a living child in a garden?" cried Monte Cristo. "And pray what do you call such an action?"

"But who said it was buried alive?"

"Why bury it there if it were dead? This garden has never been a cemetery."

"What is done to infanticides in this country?" asked Major Cavalcanti, innocently.

"Oh, their heads are soon cut off," said Danglars.

"Ah, indeed!" said Cavalcanti.

"I think so; am I not right, M. de Villefort?" asked Monte Cristo.

"Yes, Count," replied M. de Villefort, in a voice now scarcely human.

Monte Cristo saw that the two persons for whom he had prepared this scene could bear no more; so not wishing to carry it too far, he said, "Come, gentlemen, some coffee, we seem to have forgotten it;" and he conducted the guests back to the table on the lawn.

"Indeed, Count," said Madame Danglars, "I am ashamed to own it, but all your frightful stories have so upset me that I must beg you to let me sit down;" and she fell into a chair.

Monte Cristo bowed, and went to Madame de Villefort. "I think Madame Danglars again requires your bottle," he said.

But before Madame de Villefort could reach her friend, the *procureur* had found time to whisper to Madame Danglars, "I must speak to you."

"When?"

"To-morrow."

"Where?"

"In my office, if you will; that is the safest place."

"I will go." At this moment Madame de Villefort approached. "Thanks, my dear friend," said Madame Danglars, trying to smile; "it is over now, and I am much better."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE BEGGAR.

The evening passed on; Madame de Villefort expressed a desire to return to Paris, which Madame Danglars had not dared to do, notwithstanding the uneasiness she experienced. On his wife's request, M. de Villefort was the first to give the signal of departure. He offered a seat in his landau to Madame Danglars, that she might be under the care of his wife. As for M. Danglars, absorbed in an interesting conversation with M. Cavalcanti, he paid no attention to anything that was passing.

Monte Cristo, when he had begged the smelling-bottle of Madame de Villefort, had remarked the approach of Villefort to Madame Danglars, and had divined what he had said to her, though the words had been uttered in so low a voice as hardly to be heard by Madame Danglars. Without opposing their arrangements, he allowed Morrel, Château-Renaud, and Debray to leave on horseback, and the ladies in M. de Villefort's carriage. Danglars, more and more delighted with Major Cavalcanti, had offered him a seat in his carriage.

Andrea Cavalcanti found his tilbury waiting at the door; the groom, in every respect a caricature of the English fashion, was standing on tiptoe to hold a large iron-gray horse. Andrea had spoken very little during dinner; he was an intelligent lad, and he feared to utter some absurdity before so many grand people, among whom his dilating eyes beheld, not without fear, the *procureur du*

roi. Then he had been seized upon by Danglars, who, after a rapid glance at the stiffnecked old major and his modest son, taking into consideration the hospitality of the count towards them, made up his mind that he was in the society of some nabob come to Paris to finish the worldly education of his only son. He contemplated with unspeakable delight the large diamond which shone on the major's little finger; for the major, like a prudent man, in the fear that some accident might happen to his bank-notes, had immediately converted them into articles of value. Then after dinner, on the pretext of business, he had questioned the father and son upon their mode of living; and the father and son, previously informed that it was through Danglars the one was to receive his forty-eight thousand livres, and the other fifty thousand livres annually, were so full of affability that they would have shaken hands even with the banker's servants, so much did their gratitude feel the need of expression. One thing above all the rest heightened the respect, we almost might say the veneration of Danglars for Cavalcanti. The latter, faithful to the principle of Horace, *nil admirari*, had contented himself in proving his knowledge by saying in what lake the best lampreys were caught. Then he had eaten his portion of the one that was served without saying a word. Danglars therefore concluded that such luxuries were common at the table of the illustrious descendant of the Cavalcanti, who most likely in Lucca fed upon trout brought from Switzerland, and lobsters sent from England, by the same means used by the count to bring the lampreys from the Lake Fusaro, and the sterlets from the Volga; and therefore he received with marked cordiality these words of Cavalcanti, "To-morrow, Monsieur, I shall have the honor of waiting upon you on business."

"And I, Monsieur," said Danglars, "shall be most

happy to receive you." Upon which he offered to take Cavalcanti in his carriage to the Hôtel des Princes, if it would not be depriving him of the company of his son. To this Cavalcanti replied by saying that for some time past his son had lived independently of him; that he had his own horses and carriages; and that not having come together, it would not be difficult for them to leave separately. The major seated himself therefore by the side of Danglars, who was more and more charmed with the ideas of order and economy which ruled this man, who yet allowed his son fifty thousand livres a year, — which would imply a fortune of five hundred thousand or six hundred thousand livres.

As for Andrea, he began, by way of showing off, to scold his groom, who, instead of bringing the tilbury to the steps of the house, had taken it to the outer door, thus giving him the trouble of walking thirty steps to reach it. The groom heard him with humility, took the bit of the impatient animal with his left hand, and with the right held out the reins to Andrea, who, taking them from him, rested his polished boot lightly on the step. At that moment a hand touched his shoulder. The young man turned round, thinking that Danglars or Monte Cristo had forgotten something they wished to tell him, and had recalled the matter just as he was departing. But instead of either of these, he saw a strange face, sunburnt and encircled by a beard, with eyes brilliant as carbuncles, and a smile upon the mouth which displayed a perfect set of white teeth, pointed and sharp as the wolf's or jackal's. A red handkerchief encircled his gray head; torn and filthy garments covered his large bony limbs, which seemed as though, like those of a skeleton, they would rattle as he walked; and the hand with which he leaned upon the young man's shoulder, and which was the

first thing Andrea saw, seemed of a gigantic size. Did the young man recognize that face by the light of the lantern in his tilbury, or was he merely struck with the horrible appearance of his interrogator? We cannot say, but only relate the fact that he shuddered and stepped back suddenly. "What do you want of me?" he asked.

"Pardon me, my friend, if I disturb you," said the man with the red handkerchief; "but I want to speak to you."

"You have no right to beg at night," said the groom, making a movement to rid his master of the troublesome intruder.

"I am not begging, my fine fellow," said the unknown to the servant, with so ironical an expression of eye and so frightful a smile that he started back; "I only wish to say two or three words to your master, who gave me a commission to execute about a fortnight ago."

"Come," said Andrea, with sufficient nerve for his servant not to perceive his agitation, "what do you want? Speak quickly, friend."

The man said in a low voice, "I wish — I wish you to spare me the walk back to Paris. I am very tired; and not having eaten so good a dinner as you have, I can scarcely support myself."

The young man shuddered at this strange familiarity. "Tell me," he said, — "tell me what you want."

"Well, then, I want you to take me up in your fine carriage, and carry me back." Andrea turned pale, but said nothing. "Yes," said the man, thrusting his hands into his pockets, and looking impudently at the youth; "I have taken the whim into my head; do you understand, M. Benedetto?"

At this name, no doubt, the young man reflected a little, for he went towards his groom, saying, "This man is right; I did indeed charge him with a commission, the

result of which he must tell me. Walk to the barrier; there take a cab, that you may not be too late." The surprised groom retired.

"Let me at least reach a shady spot," said Andrea.

"Oh! as for that, I'll conduct you to a splendid spot," said the man with the handkerchief; and taking the horse's bit, he led the tilbury to a place where it was certainly impossible for any one to witness the honor that Andrea conferred upon him.

"Don't think I want the honor of riding in your fine carriage," said he; "oh, no, it 's only because I am tired, and also because I have a little business to talk over with you."

"Come, step in!" said the young man.

It was a pity this scene had not occurred in daylight, for it would have been a curious spectacle to see this rascal throwing himself heavily down on the cushion beside the young and elegant driver of the tilbury. Andrea drove past the last house in the village without saying a word to his companion, who smiled complacently, as though well pleased to find himself travelling in so comfortable a vehicle. Once out of Auteuil, Andrea looked around, in order to assure himself that he could be neither seen nor heard; and then stopping the horse and crossing his arms before the man, he asked, "Now, tell me why you come to disturb my tranquillity?"

"But you, my boy, why have you deceived me?"

"How have I deceived you?"

"How, — do you ask? When we parted at the Pont du Var, you told me you were going to travel through Piedmont and Tuscany; but instead of that, you come to Paris."

"How does that annoy you?"

"It does not; on the contrary, I think it will answer my purpose."

"So," said Andrea, "you are speculating upon me?"

"What fine words he uses!"

"I warn you, M. Caderousse, that you are mistaken."

"Well, well, don't be angry, my boy. You know well enough what it is to be unfortunate; and misfortunes make us jealous. I thought you were earning a living in Tuscany or Piedmont by acting as *facchino* or *cicerone*; and I pitied you sincerely, as I would a child of my own. You know I always did call you my child."

"Come, come, what then?"

"Patience! patience!"

"I am patient, but go on."

"All at once I see you pass through the barrier with a groom, a tilbury, and fine new clothes. You must have discovered a mine, or else become a stock-broker."

"So that, as you acknowledge, you are jealous?"

"No, I am pleased, — so pleased that I wished to congratulate you; but as I am not quite properly dressed, I chose my opportunity, that I might not compromise you."

"Yes, and a fine opportunity you have chosen!" exclaimed Andrea; "you speak to me before my servant."

"How can I help that, my boy? I speak to you when I can catch you. You have a quick horse, a light tilbury, you are naturally as slippery as an eel; if I had missed you to-night, I might not have had another chance."

"You see I do not conceal myself."

"You are lucky; I wish I could say as much. I do conceal myself; and then I was afraid you would not recognize me, — but you did," added Caderousse, with his unpleasant smile. "It was very polite of you."

"Come," said Andrea, "what do you want?"

"You do not speak affectionately to me, Benedetto, my old friend; that is not right. Take care, or I may become troublesome."

This menace smothered the young man's passion. He put his horse to a trot. "You should not speak so to an old friend, Caderousse, as you said just now. You are a native of Marseilles; I am—"

"Do you know, then, what you are now?"

"No; but I was brought up in Corsica. You are old and obstinate; I am young and wilful. Between folks like us threats are out of place; everything should be amicably arranged. Is it my fault if Fortune, which has frowned on you, has been kind to me?"

"Fortune has been kind to you, then? Your tilbury, your groom, your clothes, are not then hired? Good! so much the better!" said Caderousse, his eyes sparkling with avarice.

"Oh! you knew that well enough before speaking to me," said Andrea, becoming more and more excited. "If I had been wearing a handkerchief like yours on my head, rags on my back, and worn-out shoes on my feet, you would not have known me."

"You wrong me, my boy; at any rate, now that I have found you, nothing prevents my being as well dressed as any one, knowing, as I do, the goodness of your heart. If you have two coats, you will give me one of them. I used to divide my soup and beans with you when you were hungry."

"True," said Andrea.

"What an appetite you used to have! is it as good now?"

"Oh, yes," replied Andrea, laughing.

"How did you come to be dining with that prince whose house you have just left?"

"He is not a prince; simply a count."

"A count, and a rich one too, eh?"

"Yes, but you had better not have anything to say to him; he is probably not very patient."

"Oh, be satisfied! I have no design upon your count, and you shall have him all to yourself. But," added Caderousse, again smiling with the disagreeable expression he had before assumed, "you must pay for it, you understand?"

"Well, what do you want?"

"I think that with a hundred livres per month —"

"Well?"

"I could live —"

"Upon a hundred livres!"

"Poorly, you understand; but with —"

"With?"

"With a hundred and fifty livres I should be quite happy."

"Here are two hundred," said Andrea; and he placed ten louis d'or in the hand of Caderousse.

"Good!" said Caderousse.

"Apply to the steward on the first day of every month, and you will receive the same sum."

"There now, again you degrade me."

"How so?"

"You put me in communication with the servants; no, take notice that I will have business only with you."

"Well, be it so, then. Take it from me, then, and on the first of every month, so long at least as I receive my income, you shall be paid yours."

"Come, come; I always said you were a fine fellow, and it is a blessing when good fortune happens to such as you. But tell me all about it."

"Why do you wish to know?" asked Cavalcanti.

"What! do you still distrust me?"

"No; well, I have found my father."

"What! a real father?"

"Of course, so long as he pays me —"

"You 'll honor and believe him, — that 's right. What is his name?"

"Major Cavalcanti."

"Is he pleased with you?"

"So far I have appeared to answer his purpose."

"And who found this father for you?"

"The Count of Monte Cristo."

"The man whose house you have just left?"

"Yes."

"I wish you would try to find me a situation with him as grandfather, since he holds the money-chest."

"Well, I will mention you to him. Meanwhile, what are you going to do?"

"I?"

"Yes, you."

"It is very kind of you to trouble yourself about me," said Caderousse.

"Since you interest yourself in my affairs, I think it is now my turn to ask you some questions."

"Ah, true! Well; I shall rent a room in some respectable house, wear a decent coat, shave every day, and go and read the papers in a café. Then in the evening I will go to the theatre; I shall have the appearance of a retired baker. This is my wish."

"Come, if you will only put this scheme into execution, and be steady, nothing could be better."

"Do you think so, M. Bossuet? And you, what will you become, — a peer of France?"

"Ah!" said Andrea, "who knows?".

"Major Cavalcanti is already one perhaps; but unfortunately hereditary rank is abolished."

"No politics, Caderousse! And now that you have all you want, and we understand each other, jump down from the tilbury and disappear."

"Not at all, my good friend."

"What! not at all?"

"Why, just think for a moment; with this red handkerchief on my head, with scarcely any shoes, no papers, and ten gold napoleons in my pocket, without reckoning what was there before, making in all just two hundréd livres, — why, I should certainly be arrested at the barriers! Then to justify myself, I should be obliged to say that you gave me the money. This would cause inquiries; it would be found that I left Toulon without giving due notice, and I should then be reconducted to the shores of the Mediterranean. Then I should become simply No. 106; and good-by to my dream of resembling the retired baker! No, no, my boy; I prefer remaining honorably in the capital."

Andrea scowled. Certainly, as he had himself boasted, the reputed son of Major Cavalcanti was a wicked fellow. He drew up for an instant, and as he threw a rapid glance around, his hand went innocently into his pocket and began playing with the trigger-guard of a pocket-pistol. But meanwhile Caderousse, who had never taken his eyes off his companion, passed his hand behind his back, and very gently opened a long Spanish knife, which he always carried with him to be ready in case of need. The two friends, as we see, were worthy of and understood one another. Andrea's hand left his pocket inoffensively, and was carried up to the red mustache, which it played with for some time. "Good Caderousse!" he said; "how happy you will be!"

"I will do my best," said the innkeeper of the Pont du Gard, returning his knife to his sleeve.

"Well, then, we will go into Paris. But how will you pass through the barrier without exciting suspicion? It seems to me that you are in more danger riding than on foot."

"Wait," said Caderousse, "we shall see." He then took the great-coat with the large collar, which the groom had left behind in the tilbury, and put it on his back; then he took off Cavalcanti's hat, which he placed upon his own head, and finally assumed the careless attitude of a servant whose master drives himself.

"But tell me," said Andrea, "am I to remain bare-headed?"

"Pooh!" said Caderousse; "it is so windy that your hat will appear to have been blown away."

"Come on, then," said Andrea; "and let us end it."

"Who is stopping you?" said Caderousse; "not I, I hope."

"Pshaw!" said Andrea.

They passed the barrier without accident. At the first cross-street Andrea stopped his horse, and Caderousse leaped out.

"Well!" said Andrea, "my servant's coat and my hat?"

"Ah!" said Caderousse, "you would not like me to risk taking cold?"

"But what am I to do?"

"You! oh, you are young, while I am beginning to get old. *Au revoir*, Benedetto;" and running into a court, he disappeared.

"Alas!" said Andrea, sighing, "one cannot be completely happy in this world!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A CONJUGAL SCENE.

At the Place Louis XV. the three young people separated, — that is to say, Morrel went by way of the boulevards, Château-Renaud took the Pont de la Révolution, and Debray followed the direction of the quay. Most probably Morrel and Château-Renaud returned to their "domestic hearths," as they say in the forum of the Chamber in well-turned speeches, and in the theatre of the Rue Richelieu in well-written pieces; but it was not so with Debray. When he reached the wicket of the Louvre, he turned to the left, galloped across the Carrousel, passed through the Rue St. Roch, and issuing from the Rue de la Michodière, he arrived at M. Danglars's door at the same time that Villefort's landau, after having deposited him and his wife at the Faubourg St. Honoré, stopped to leave the baroness at her own house. Debray, with the air of a man familiar with the house, entered first into the court, threw his bridle to a footman, and returned to the carriage-door to receive Madame Danglars, to whom he offered his arm to conduct her to her apartments. The gate once closed, and Debray and the baroness alone in the court, he asked, "What was the matter with you, Hermine? and why were you so affected at that story, or rather fable, which the count related?"

"Because I have been in such shocking spirits all the evening, my friend," said the baroness.

"No, Hermine," replied Debray; "you cannot make

me believe that. On the contrary, you were in excellent spirits when you arrived at the count's. M. Danglars was disagreeable, certainly; but I know how much you care for his ill-humor. Some one has vexed you. Tell me about it; you know well that I will not allow you to endure any impertinence."

"You are deceived, Lucien, I assure you," replied Madame Danglars; "and what I have told you is true, besides the ill-humor you remarked, but which I did not think it worth while to allude to."

It was evident that Madame Danglars was suffering from that nervous irritability which women frequently cannot account for even to themselves; or that, as Debray had conjectured, she had experienced some secret agitation that she would not acknowledge to any one. Being a man familiar with moodiness as one of the elements of female life, he did not then press his inquiries, but waited for a more appropriate opportunity, either to question her again or to receive an explanation voluntarily given. At the door of her chamber the baroness met Mademoiselle Cornélie, her confidential maid. "What is my daughter doing?" she asked.

"She practised all the evening and then went to bed," replied Mademoiselle Cornélie.

"Yet I think I hear her piano."

"It is Mademoiselle Louise d'Armilly, who is playing while Mademoiselle is in bed."

"Well," said Madame Danglars, "come and undress me."

They entered the bedroom. Debray stretched himself upon a large couch, and Madame Danglars passed on into her dressing-room with Mademoiselle Cornélie.

"My dear M. Lucien," said Madame Danglars, through the *portière*, "you are always complaining that Eugénie will not address a word to you."

"Madame," said Lucien, playing with a little dog, who, recognizing him as a friend of the house, expected to be caressed, "I am not the only one who makes similar complaints; I think I heard Morcerf say that he could not extract a word from his *fiancée.*"

"True," said Madame Danglars; "but I think that one of these days all that will be changed, and that you will see her enter your study."

"My study?"

"I mean that of the minister."

"And what for?"

"To ask for an engagement at the opera. Really, I never saw such an infatuation for music; it is quite ridiculous for a young lady of fashion."

Debray smiled. "Well," said he, "let her come with your consent and that of the baron, and we will try and give her an engagement, though we are very poor to pay such talent as hers."

"Go, Cornélie," said Madame Danglars; "I do not need you any longer."

Cornélie obeyed; and the next minute Madame Danglars left her room in a charming loose dress and came and sat down close to Debray. Then, thoughtful, she began to caress the little spaniel. Lucien looked at her for a moment in silence. "Come, Hermine," he said after a short time, "answer candidly; something vexes you, is it not so?"

"Nothing," answered the baroness. And yet, as she could scarcely breathe, she rose and went towards a looking-glass. "I am frightful to-night," she said.

Debray rose, smiling, and was about to contradict the baroness upon this latter point, when the door opened suddenly. M. Danglars appeared; Debray reseated himself. At the noise of the door Madame Danglars turned

round and looked upon her husband with an astonishment she took no trouble to conceal.

"Good-evening, Madame!" said the banker; "good-evening, M. Debray!"

Probably the baroness thought this unexpected visit signified a desire to make amends for the sharp words he had uttered during the day. Assuming a dignified air, she turned round to Debray without answering her husband. "Read me something, M. Debray," she said.

Debray, who was slightly disturbed at this visit, recovered himself when he saw the calmness of the baroness, and took up a book marked by a mother-of-pearl knife inlaid with gold.

"Excuse me," said the banker; "but you will tire yourself, Baroness, by such late hours. It is eleven o'clock; and M. Debray lives at some distance from here."

Debray was petrified, — not that there was anything surprising in Danglars's tone, which was entirely calm and polite; but through that calm and that politeness appeared a certain unusual determination to oppose for that evening the wishes of his wife. The baroness was also surprised, and showed her astonishment by a look which would doubtless have had some effect upon her husband if he had not been intently occupied with the paper, where he was seeking the closing price of the funds; so that the fierce look shot at him was wholly wasted.

"M. Lucien," said the baroness, "I assure you I have no desire to sleep; that I have a thousand things to tell you this evening; and that you are going to spend the night listening to me, even though you should sleep standing."

"I am at your service, Madame," replied Lucien, quietly.

"My dear M. Debray," said the banker, "do not kill yourself listening all night to the follies of Madame Danglars, for you can hear them as well to-morrow; but I claim

to-night, and will devote it, if you will allow me, to talking over some serious matters with my wife."

This time the blow was so well aimed and hit so directly that Lucien and the baroness were staggered; and they interrogated each other with their eyes, as if to seek help against this aggression; but the irresistible will of the master of the house prevailed, and the husband was victorious.

"Do not think I wish to turn you out, my dear Debray," continued Danglars; "oh, no! not at all! An unexpected occurrence forces me to ask my wife to have a little conversation with me; I make such a request so seldom that I am sure you cannot think unkindly of me for it."

Debray muttered something, bowed, and went out, knocking himself against the edge of the door, like Nathan in "Athalie."

"It is extraordinary," he said, when the door was closed behind him, "how easily these husbands, whom we ridicule, gain an advantage over us."

Lucien having left, Danglars took his place on the sofa, closed the open book, and placing himself in an attitude outrageously affected, he began playing with the dog; but the animal, not liking him so well as Debray, and attempting to bite him, Danglars seized him by the skin of his neck, and threw him to the other side of the room upon a couch. The animal uttered a cry during the transit, but arrived at its destination, it crouched behind the cushions, and stupefied at such unusual treatment, remained silent and motionless.

"Do you know, Monsieur," asked the baroness, "that you are improving? Generally you are only rude; to-night you are brutal."

"It is because I am in a worse humor than usual," replied Danglars.

Hermine looked at the banker with supreme disdain.

These glances ordinarily exasperated the proud Danglars; but this evening he took no notice of them.

"And what have I to do with your ill-humor?" said the baroness, irritated at the impassiveness of her husband. "Do these things concern me? Keep your ill-humor to yourself, or confine it to your offices; and since you have clerks whom you pay, vent it upon them."

"Not so," replied Danglars; "your advice is wrong, so I shall not follow it. My offices are my Pactolus, as I think M. Demoustier says; and I will not retard its course, or disturb its calm. My clerks are honest men who earn my fortune, whom I pay much below their deserts, if I may value them according to what they bring in; therefore I shall not get into a passion with them. Those with whom I will be in a passion are those who eat my dinners, mount my horses, and exhaust my fortune."

"And pray who are the persons who exhaust your fortune? Explain yourself more clearly, I beg you, Monsieur."

"Oh, make yourself easy! I am not speaking riddles, and you will soon know what I mean. The people who exhaust my fortune are those who draw out seven hundred thousand livres in the course of an hour."

"I do not understand you, Monsieur," said the baroness, trying to disguise the agitation of her voice and the flush of her face.

"You understand me very well, on the contrary," said Danglars; "but if you will persist, I will tell you that I have just lost seven hundred thousand livres upon the Spanish loan."

"Ah, indeed!" said the baroness, with a sneer; "and you hold me responsible for that loss?"

"Why not?"

"Is it my fault that you have lost seven hundred thousand livres?"

"Certainly it is not mine."

"Once for all, Monsieur," replied the baroness, sharply, "I have told you never to talk money to me; it is a language that I never heard in the house of my parents or in that of my first husband."

"Oh! I can well believe that, for neither of them was worth a penny."

"The better reason for my not being conversant with the slang of the bank, which is here dinning in my ears from morning to night; that noise of jingling crowns which are counted and recounted is odious to me. I know only one sound which is more disagreeable to me, and that is the sound of your voice."

"Really!" said Danglars. "Well, this surprises me, for I thought you took the liveliest interest in my affairs!"

"I! What could put such an idea into your head?"

"Yourself!"

"Ah! indeed!"

"Most assuredly."

"I should like to know upon what occasion?"

"Ah, that is very easily done! Last February you were the first who told me of the Haytian funds. You had dreamed that a ship had entered the harbor at Havre; that this ship brought news that a payment we had looked upon as lost was going to be made. I know how clear-sighted your dreams are; I therefore purchased immediately as many shares as I could of the Haytian debt, and I gained four hundred thousand livres by it, of which one hundred thousand have been honestly paid to you. You spent it as you pleased, — that was your business. In March there was a question about a grant to a railway. Three companies presented themselves, each offering equal securities.

You told me that your instinct, — and although you pretend to know nothing about speculations, I think, on the contrary, that your instinct is well developed in regard to certain affairs, — well, you told me that your instinct led you to believe the grant would be given to the company called the Southern. I bought two-thirds of the shares of that company; as you had foreseen, the shares became of triple value, and I picked up a million, from which two hundred and fifty thousand livres were paid to you for pin-money. How have you spent this two hundred and fifty thousand livres?"

"When are you coming to the point?" cried the baroness, shivering with anger and impatience.

"Patience, Madame! I am coming to it."

"That's fortunate!"

"In April you went to dine at the minister's. You heard a private conversation respecting the affairs of Spain, — the expulsion of Don Carlos. I bought some Spanish shares. The expulsion took place; and I pocketed six hundred thousand livres the day Charles V. repassed the Bidassoa. Of these six hundred thousand livres you took fifty thousand crowns. They were yours; you disposed of them according to your fancy, and I asked no questions. But it is not the less true that you have this year received five hundred thousand livres."

"Well, Monsieur, what next?"

"Ah, yes, what next? Well, right on the heels of that, the whole thing is muddled."

"Really, your manner of speaking — "

"It expresses my meaning, and that is all I want. Well, three days after that you talk politics with M. Debray, and you fancy from his words that Don Carlos has returned to Spain. Then I sell my shares; the news spreads, a panic ensues, and I no longer sell but give them. Next

day it appears that the news was false, and that by this false news I have lost seven hundred thousand livres."

"Well?"

"Well! since I gave you a fourth of my gains, I think you owe me a fourth of my losses; the fourth of seven hundred thousand livres is one hundred and seventy-five thousand livres."

"What you say is absurd, and I cannot see why M. Debray's name is mixed up in this affair."

"Because if you do not possess the one hundred and seventy-five thousand livres which I reclaim, you must have lent them to your friends; and M. Debray is one of your friends."

"For shame!" exclaimed the baroness.

"Oh! let us have no gestures, no screams, no modern drama, Madame, or you will oblige me to tell you that I see from here Debray laughing over the five hundred thousand livres which you have counted out to him this year, and saying to himself that he has found what the most skilful gamblers have never discovered, — a game in which one wins without putting up money, and loses without loss."

The baroness became enraged. "Wretch!" she cried; "will you dare to tell me you did not know that with which you now reproach me?"

"I do not say that I did know it; and I do not say that I did not know it. I merely tell you to look into my conduct during the last four years since we ceased to be husband and wife, and see whether it has not always been consistent. Some time after our rupture you wished to study music under the celebrated baritone who made such a successful *début* at the Théâtre Italien; at the same time I felt inclined to learn dancing of the *danseuse* who acquired such a reputation in London. This cost me on

your account and mine, one hundred thousand livres. I said nothing, for we must have peace in the house; and one hundred thousand livres for a lady and gentleman to be properly instructed in music and dancing are not too much. Well, you soon become tired of singing, and you take a fancy to study diplomacy with the minister's secretary. I allow you to study. You understand, — what is it to me so long as you pay for your lessons out of your own cash-box? But to-day I find you are drawing on mine, and that your apprenticeship may cost me seven hundred thousand livres per month. Stop there, Madame! for this cannot go on. Either the diplomatist must give his lessons gratis, and I will tolerate him, or he must never set his foot again in my house, — do you understand, Madame?"

"Oh, this is too much, Monsieur," cried Hermine, choking; "you go beyond the bounds of vulgarity."

"But," continued Danglars, "I see with pleasure that you have not remained on this side of them, and that you have voluntarily complied with the maxim of the Code, 'the wife follows her husband.'"

"Insults!"

"You are right; let us establish our facts, and reason coolly. I have never interfered in your affairs, excepting for your good; treat me in the same way. You say you have nothing to do with my cash-box. Be it so. Do as you like with your own, but do not fill or empty mine. Besides, how do I know that this was not a political trick; that the minister, enraged at seeing me in the opposition, and jealous of the popular sympathy I excite, has not concerted with M. Debray to ruin me?"

"How probable that is!"

"Why not? Who ever heard of such a thing? — a false telegraphic despatch! that borders on the impossible

Signals totally different given in the last two telegrams! It was done on purpose for me, I am sure of it."

"Monsieur," said the baroness, humbly, "you seem not to be aware that that employee has been discharged; that they even intended to bring him into court; that orders were issued to arrest him; and that this order would have been put into execution if he had not escaped the first search by flight, which proves either his madness or his culpability. It was a mistake."

"Yes, which made fools laugh; which made the minister have a sleepless night; which made the minister's secretaries blacken several sheets of paper; but which cost me seven hundred thousand livres."

"But, Monsieur," said Hermine, suddenly, "if all this is, as you say, caused by M. Debray, why, instead of going direct to him, do you come and tell me of it? Why to accuse the man do you address the woman?"

"Do I know M. Debray; do I wish to know him; do I wish to know that he gives advice; do I wish to follow it; do I speculate? No; it is you who do all this, not I."

"Still it seems to me that as you profit by it — "

Danglars shrugged his shoulders. "Foolish creatures," he exclaimed, "are the women who fancy they have talent because they have managed two or three intrigues without being the talk of Paris! But know that if you had even hidden your irregularities from your husband, which is but the commencement of the art, — for generally husbands do not wish to see, — you would then have been but a faint imitation of half your friends among the women of the world. But it has not been so with me, — I see, and always have seen. During the last sixteen years, you may perhaps have hidden a thought; but not a step, not an action, not a fault has escaped me, while you flattered yourself upon [illegible]ved you had

deceived me. What has been the result? That, thanks to my pretended ignorance, there are none of your friends, from M. de Villefort to M. Debray, who have not trembled before me. There is not one who has not treated me as the master of the house, — the only title I desire with respect to you; there is not one, in fact, who would have dared to speak of me as I have spoken of them this day. I will allow you to make me hateful; but I will prevent your rendering me ridiculous, and, above all, I forbid you to ruin me."

The baroness had been tolerably composed until the name of Villefort had been pronounced; but then she became pale, and rising as if moved by a spring, she stretched out her hands like one who seeks to exorcise an apparition. She then took two or three steps towards her husband, as if to tear the secret from him of which he was ignorant, or which perhaps in pursuance of some scheme, odious, like all his schemes, he was unwilling wholly to disclose. "M. de Villefort! what do you mean?"

"I mean that M. de Nargonne, your first husband, being neither a philosopher nor a banker, or perhaps being both, and seeing there was nothing to be got out of a *procureur du roi*, died of grief or anger at finding, after an absence of nine months, that you had been *enceinte* six. I am brutal, — I not only allow it, but boast of it; it is one of the reasons of my success in commercial business. Why did he kill himself instead of you? Because he had no cash to save. My life belongs to my cash. M. Debray has made me lose seven hundred thousand livres; let him bear his share of the loss, and we will go on as before. If not, let him become bankrupt for the one hundred and seventy thousand livres, and do as all bankrupts do, — disappear. He is a charming fellow, I allow, when his news is correct; but when it is not, there are fifty others in the world who would do better than he."

Madame Danglars was rooted to the spot; howe made a violent effort to reply to this last attack. She fell upon a chair, thinking of Villefort, of the dinner scene, of the strange series of misfortunes which had taken place in her house during the last few days and had transformed her quiet establishment into a scene of scandalous discussions. Danglars did not even look at her, though she tried all she could to faint. He shut the bedroom door after him without adding another word, and returned to his apartments; and when Madame Danglars recovered from her half-fainting condition, she could almost believe she had had a disagreeable dream.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MATRIMONIAL PROJECTS.

The day following this scene, at the hour which Debray usually chose to pay a visit to Madame Danglars on his way to his office, his coupé did not appear in the court. At that hour, — that is, about half-past twelve, — Madame Danglars ordered her carriage and went out. Danglars, placed behind a curtain, watched the departure he had been waiting for. He gave orders that he should be informed when Madame Danglars reappeared; but at two o'clock she had not returned. He then called for his horses, drove to the Chamber, and inscribed his name to speak against the budget. From twelve to two o'clock he had remained in his study, unsealing his despatches, and becoming more and more sad every minute, heaping figure upon figure, and receiving, among other visits, one from Major Cavalcanti, who, as stiff and as exact as ever, presented himself precisely at the hour named the night before, to terminate his business with the banker. On leaving the Chamber, Danglars, who had shown violent marks of agitation during the sitting, and had been more bitter than ever against the ministry, re-entered his carriage, and told the coachman to drive to the Avenue des Champs Élysées, No. 30.

Monte Cristo was at home; but he was engaged with some one, and begged Danglars to wait for a moment in the drawing-room. While the banker was waiting, the door opened, and a man dressed as an abbé entered,

who, doubtless more familiar with the house than he was, instead of waiting merely bowed, and passing on to the inner apartments, disappeared. A minute after, the door by which the priest had entered reopened, and Monte Cristo appeared. "Pardon me," said he, "my dear baron, but one of my friends, the Abbé Busoni, whom you perhaps saw pass by, has just arrived in Paris; not having seen him for a long time, I could not make up my mind to leave him sooner. I hope you will find this a sufficient excuse for my having made you wait."

"Nay," said Danglars, "it is my fault; I have chosen a wrong time for my visit, and will retire."

"Not at all; on the contrary, be seated. But what is the matter with you? you look careworn. Really you alarm me! For a capitalist to be sad presages, like the appearance of a comet, some misfortune to the world."

"I have been in ill-luck for several days," said Danglars; "and I have heard nothing but bad news."

"Ah, indeed!" said Monte Cristo. "Have you had another fall at the Bourse?"

"No; I am cured of that for some days at least. My trouble now arises from a bankruptcy at Trieste."

"Really! Does your bankrupt happen to be Jacopo Manfredi?"

"Exactly so. Imagine a man who has transacted business with me for I do not know how long, to the amount of eight hundred thousand or nine hundred thousand livres per year. Never a mistake or delay, — a fellow who paid like a prince. Well, I was a million in advance with him, and now my fine Jacopo Manfredi suspends payment!"

"Really!"

"It is an unheard of fatality. I draw upon him for six hundred thousand livres, my bills are returned unpaid; and more than that, I hold bills of exchange signed by

h..a to the value of four hundred thousand livres, payable at his correspondent's in Paris at the end of this month. To-day is the 30th. I send to him for payment; and behold, the correspondent has disappeared! This, with my Spanish affairs, makes a pretty end to the month for me."

"Then you really lost by that affair in Spain?"

"Yes; seven hundred thousand livres out of my cash-box, — only that!"

"Why, how could you make such a mistake, — an old lynx like you?"

"Oh, it is my wife's fault. She dreamed Don Carlos had returned to Spain; she believes in dreams. It is magnetism, she says; and when she dreams a thing it is sure to happen, she assures me. On this conviction I allow her to speculate. She has her bank and her stock-broker; she speculates and she loses. It is true she speculates with her own money, not mine; nevertheless, you can understand that when seven hundred thousand livres leave the wife's pocket the husband always finds it out. But do you mean to say you have not heard of this? Why, the thing has made a tremendous noise!"

"Yes, I heard it spoken of, but I did not know the details; and then no one can be more ignorant than I am of the affairs in the Bourse."

"Then you do not speculate?"

"I? How could I speculate when I already have so much trouble in regulating my income? I should be obliged, besides my steward, to keep a clerk and a boy. But touching these Spanish affairs, I think the baroness did not altogether dream that story of Don Carlos's return. The papers said something about it, did they not?"

"Then you believe the newspapers?"

"I? — not the least in the world; only I fancied

that the honest 'Messager' was an exception to the rule, and that it announced genuine news, — telegraphic news."

"Well! this is what puzzles me," replied Danglars; "the news of the return of Don Carlos was in fact telegraphic news."

"So that," said Monte Cristo, "you have lost nearly one million seven hundred thousand livres this month."

"Not nearly, indeed; that is exactly my loss."

"*Diable!*" said Monte Cristo, compassionately, "it is a hard blow for a third-rate fortune."

"Third-rate," said Danglars, rather humbled, "what do you mean by that?"

"Certainly," continued Monte Cristo; "I classify fortunes in three grades, — first-rate, second-rate, and third-rate fortunes. I call those first-rate which are composed of treasures one possesses under one's hand, such as mines, lands, and funded property, in such states as France, Austria, and England, provided these treasures and property form a total of about a hundred millions. I call those second-rate fortunes gained by manufacturing enterprises, joint-stock companies, viceroyalties, and principalities, not yielding an income of more than one million five hundred thousand livres, and constituting in all a capital of about fifty millions. Finally, I call those third-rate fortunes which consist of a capital accumulated in diverse enterprises, depending for increase upon the will of others or upon chance, which a bankruptcy can impair, and a telegraphic despatch can throw into disorder, — fortunes, in short, resting on speculations and operations that are subject to that fatality which may be compared to nature's forces as the smaller to the greater; the whole forming a capital, fictitious or real, of about fifteen millions. I think this is about your position, is it not?"

"Confound it! yes!" replied Danglars.

"The result, then, of six more such months as this," continued Monte Cristo, quietly, "would be to reduce a third-rate house to despair."

"Oh!" said Danglars, becoming very pale, "how you are running on!"

"Let us imagine seven such months," continued Monte Cristo, in the same tone. "Tell me, have you ever thought that seven times one million seven hundred thousand livres make about twelve millions? No? well, you are right, for if you indulged in such reflections you would never risk your principal, which is to the speculator what the skin is to civilized man. We have our clothes, some more splendid than others, — this is our credit; but when a man dies, he has only his skin. In the same way, on retiring from business, you have nothing but your real principal of about five or six millions at the most; for third-rate fortunes are never more than a fourth of what they appear to be, — like the locomotive on a railway, the size of which is magnified by the smoke and steam surrounding it. Well, out of the five or six millions which form your real capital you have just lost nearly two millions, which must of course in the same degree diminish your credit and fictitious fortune; to follow out my simile, your skin has been opened by bleeding, which, repeated three or four times, will cause death. Ah! you must give your attention to it, my dear M. Danglars. Do you want money? Do you wish me to lend you some?"

"What a bad calculator you are!" exclaimed Danglars, calling to his assistance all his philosophy and dissimulation. "I have made money at the same time by speculations which have succeeded. I have made up for the loss of blood by nutrition. I lost a battle in Spain, I have been defeated in Trieste; but my naval army in India will

have taken some galleons, and my Mexican pioneers will have discovered some mine."

"Very good! very good! But the wound remains, and will reopen at the first loss."

"No! for I am embarked only in certainties," replied Danglars, with the cheap eloquence of a charlatan bolstering up his credit; "to overturn me three governments must fall."

"Well; such things have been!"

"The earth must withhold its harvests!"

"Recollect the seven fat and the seven lean kine."

"Or the sea must withdraw itself, as in the days of Pharaoh. There are still many seas remaining; and in an emergency of that kind the vessels might be turned into caravans."

"So much the better! I congratulate you, my dear M. Danglars," said Monte Cristo. "I see I was deceived, and that you rank among those whose fortunes are of the second grade."

"I think I may aspire to that honor," said Danglars, with a smile, which reminded Monte Cristo of one of those sickly moons which bad artists are so fond of daubing into their pictures of ruins; "but while we are speaking of business," he added, pleased to find an opportunity of changing the subject, "tell me what I am to do for M. Cavalcanti."

"Give him money, if he has letters of credit to you which appear to be trustworthy."

"Excellent! he presented himself this morning with a draft on you for forty thousand livres, payable at sight, signed by Busoni, and sent by you to me with your indorsement; of course, I immediately counted him over the forty bank-notes."

Monte Cristo nodded his head in token of assent.

"But that is not all," continued Danglars; "he has opened an account with my house for his son."

"May I ask how much he allows the young man?"

"Five thousand livres per month."

"Sixty thousand livres per year. I suspected that Cavalcanti to be a stingy fellow. How can a young man live upon five thousand livres a month?"

"But you understand that if the young man should want a few thousands more — "

"Do not advance it; the father will never repay it. You do not know these ultramontane millionnaires; they are regular misers. And by whom is that credit opened?"

"Oh, by the house of Fenzi, one of the best in Florence."

"I do not mean to say you will lose, but nevertheless mind you hold to the terms of the letter."

"Have you, then, no confidence in this Cavalcanti?"

"I? oh, I would advance six millions on his signature. I was only speaking in reference to the second-rate fortunes we were mentioning just now."

"And with all this, how plain he is! I never should have taken him for anything more than a mere major."

"And you would have flattered him, for certainly, as you say, he has no manner. The first time I saw him he appeared to me like an old lieutenant who had grown mouldy beneath his epaulette. But all the Italians are the same; they are like old Jews when they are not glittering like the magi of the East."

"The young man is better," said Danglars.

"Yes; a little nervous perhaps, but upon the whole he appeared very well. I was uneasy about him."

"Why?"

"Because when you met him at my house he had but just made his entrance in the social world, as they told

me. He has been travelling with a very severe tutor, and had never been to Paris before."

"All these Italians of rank marry among themselves, do they not?" asked Danglars, carelessly; "they like to unite their fortunes."

"It is usual, certainly; but Cavalcanti is an original who does nothing like other people. I cannot help thinking he has brought his son to France to choose a wife."

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"And you have heard his fortune mentioned?"

"Nothing else was talked of; only some said he was worth millions, and others that he did not possess a farthing."

"And what is your opinion?"

"I ought not to influence you, because it is only my own personal impression."

"Well; and it is that —"

"My opinion is that all these old *podestats*, these ancient *condottieri*, — for the Cavalcanti have commanded armies and governed provinces, — my opinion, I say, is that they have buried their millions in corners, the secret of which they have only transmitted to their eldest sons, who have done the same from generation to generation; and the proof is that they are all yellow and dry, like the florins of the republic, a reflected likeness of which they acquire by dint of looking at them."

"Certainly," said Danglars, "and this is further supported by the fact of their not possessing an inch of land."

"Very little at least; I know of none which Cavalcanti possesses except his palace in Lucca."

"Ah! he has a palace?" said Danglars, laughing; "come, that is something."

"Yes; and more than that, he lets it to the Minister of Finance, while he lives in a simple house. Oh! as I told you before, I think the good man is very close!"

"Come, you do not flatter him."

"I scarcely know him; I think I have seen him three times in my life. All I know relating to him is through the Abbé Busoni and himself; the abbé was speaking to me this morning of Cavalcanti's plans in regard to his son, and gave me to understand that Cavalcanti, tired of letting his property lie dormant in Italy, which is a dead nation, wished to find a method, either in France or England, of multiplying his millions. But remember that though I place great confidence in the Abbé Busoni, personally I am not responsible for this."

"Never mind; accept my thanks for the client you have sent me. It is a fine name to inscribe on my lists; and my cashier was quite proud of it when I explained to him who the Cavalcanti were. By the way, — a question in passing, — when men of that sort marry their sons, do they give them any fortune?"

"Oh, that depends upon circumstances. I know an Italian prince, rich as a gold mine, one of the noblest families in Tuscany, who, when his sons married according to his wish, gave them millions; and when they married against his consent, allowed them only thirty crowns a month. Should Andrea marry according to his father's views, he will perhaps give him one, two, or three millions. For example, supposing it were the daughter of a banker, he might take an interest in the house of the father-in-law of his son. Then again, if the proposed daughter-in-law is displeasing to him, — good-by; Father Cavalcanti takes the key, double-locks his coffer, and M. Andrea is obliged to live like the son of a Parisian family, by

ng cards or rattling the dice."

"Ah! that boy will find out some Bavarian or Peruvian princess; he will want a crown and an immense fortune."

"No, these grand lords on the other side of the Alps frequently marry into plain families; like Jupiter, they like to cross the race. But do you wish to marry Andrea, my dear M. Danglars, that you are asking so many questions?"

"Upon my word!" said Danglars, "it would not be a bad speculation, I fancy; and you know I am a speculator."

"You are not thinking of Mademoiselle Danglars, I hope; you would not like poor Andrea to have his throat cut by Albert?"

"Albert!" repeated Danglars, shrugging his shoulders; "ah, yes; he would care very little about it, I think."

"But he is betrothed to your daughter, I believe?"

"Certainly, M. de Morcerf and I have talked about this marriage; but Madame de Morcerf and Albert —"

"You do not mean to say that it would not be a good match?"

"Indeed, I imagine that Mademoiselle Danglars is as good as M. de Morcerf."

"Mademoiselle Danglars's fortune will be great, no doubt, especially if the telegraph should not make any more mistakes."

"Oh! I do not mean her fortune only; but tell me —"

"What?"

"Why did you not invite Morcerf and his family to your dinner?"

"I did so; but he excused himself on account of Madame de Morcerf being obliged to go to Dieppe for the benefit of sea air."

"Yes, yes," said Danglars, laughing; "it would do her a great deal of good."

"Why so?"

"Because it is the air that she breathed in her youth." Monte Cristo let the epigram pass without appearing to notice it.

"But still, if Albert be not so rich as Mademoiselle Danglars," said the count, "you must allow that he has a good name?"

"So he has; but I like mine as well."

"Certainly, your name is popular, and does honor to the title they have bestowed upon you; but you are too intelligent not to know that according to a prejudice too firmly rooted to be exterminated, a nobility which dates back five centuries is worth more than one that can reckon only twenty years."

"And for this very reason," said Danglars, with a smile which he tried to make sardonic, "I prefer M. Andrea Cavalcanti to M. Albert de Morcerf."

"Still, I should not think the Morcerfs would yield to the Cavalcanti."

"The Morcerfs! Stay, my dear count," said Danglars; "you are a clever man, are you not?"

"I think so."

"And you understand heraldry?"

"A little."

"Well, look at my coat-of-arms, it is worth more than Morcerf's."

"Why so?"

"Because, though I am not a baron by birth, my real name is at least Danglars."

"Well, what then?"

"While his name is not Morcerf."

"How! — not Morcerf?"

"Not the least in the world."

"Oh, come now!"

"I have been made a baron, so that I actually am one; he made himself a count, so that he is not one at all."

"Impossible!"

"Listen, my dear count, M. de Morcerf has been my friend, or rather my acquaintance, during the last thirty years. You know I have made the most of my arms, though I never forgot my origin."

"A proof of great humility or great pride," said Monte Cristo.

"Well, when I was a clerk, Morcerf was a mere fisherman."

"And then he was called—"

"Fernand."

"Only Fernand?"

"Fernand Mondego."

"You are sure?"

"I should think so! I have bought enough fish of him to know his name."

"Then why did you think of giving your daughter to him?"

"Because Fernand and Danglars, being both *parvenus*, both having become noble, both rich, are about equal in worth, excepting that there have been certain things mentioned of him that were never said of me."

"What are they?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"Ah, yes! what you tell me recalls to mind something about the name of Fernand Mondego. I have heard that name in Greece."

"In conjunction with the affairs of Ali Pacha?"

"Exactly so."

"This is the mystery," said Danglars; "I acknowledge I would have given anything to find it out."

"It would be very easy if you much wished it."

"How so?"

"Probably you have some correspondent in Greece?"

"Of course I have."

"At Janina?"

"Everywhere."

"Well, write to your correspondent in Janina, and ask him what part was played by a Frenchman named Fernand Mondego in the catastrophe of Ali Tebelin."

"You are right," exclaimed Danglars, rising quickly; "I will write to-day."

"Do so."

"I will do it."

"And if you should hear of anything very scandalous indeed —"

"I will communicate it to you."

"You will oblige me." Danglars rushed out of the room, and made but one bound into his carriage.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE OFFICE OF THE PROCUREUR DU ROI.

Let us leave the banker driving his horses at their fullest speed, and follow Madame Danglars in her morning excursion. We have said that at half-past twelve o'clock Madame Danglars had ordered her horses, and had left home in the carriage. She directed her course towards the Faubourg St. Germain, went down the Rue Mazarine, and stopped at the Passage du Pont Neuf. She descended, and crossed the passage. She was very plainly dressed, as would be the case with a woman of taste going out in the morning. At the Rue Guénégaud she called a *fiacre*, and gave as her destination the Rue du Harlay. As soon as she was seated in the coach, she drew from her pocket a very thick black veil, which she tied on to her straw hat. She then replaced the hat, and saw with pleasure, in a little pocket-mirror, that her white complexion and brilliant eyes were alone visible. The *fiacre* crossed the Pont Neuf and entered the Rue du Harlay by the Place Dauphine. The driver was paid as the door opened, and stepping lightly up the stairs, Madame Danglars soon reached the hall of the Pas Perdus.

There was a great deal going on that morning, and many busy persons were at the Palais. Busy persons pay very little attention to women; and Madame Danglars crossed the hall without exciting any more attention than would any other woman calling upon her lawyer. There was a great press of people in M. de Villefort's ante-cham-

ber; but Madame Danglars had no occasion even to pronounce her name. The instant she appeared, the doorkeeper rose, came to her, and asked her whether she was not the person with whom the *procureur du roi* had made an appointment; and on her affirmative answer being given, he conducted her by a private passage to M. de Villefort's office. The magistrate was seated in an armchair, writing, with his back towards the door; he heard it open, and the doorkeeper pronounce the words, "Walk in, Madame," and then reclose it, and did not move; but no sooner had the man's footsteps ceased than he started up, drew the bolts, closed the curtains, and examined every corner of the room. Then, when he had assured himself that he could neither be seen nor heard, and was relieved of that anxiety, he said, "Thanks, Madame, — thanks for your punctuality;" and he offered a chair to Madame Danglars, which she accepted, for her heart beat so violently that she felt nearly suffocated.

"It is a long time, Madame," said the *procureur du roi*, describing a half-circle with his chair, so as to place himself exactly opposite to Madame Danglars, — "it is a long time since I had the pleasure of speaking alone with you; and I regret that we have now met only to enter upon a painful conversation."

"Nevertheless, Monsieur, you see I have answered your first appeal; although certainly the conversation must be much more painful for me than for you."

Villefort smiled bitterly. "It is true, then," he said, rather uttering his thoughts aloud than addressing his companion, — "it is true, then, that all our actions leave their traces — some sad, others bright — on our paths! It is then true that every step in our lives resembles the course of an insect on the sand, — it leaves its track! Alas! to many the path is traced by tears."

"Monsieur," said Madame Danglars, "you can feel for my emotion, can you not? Spare me, then, I beseech you! When I look at this room, whence so many guilty creatures have departed trembling and ashamed; when I look at that chair before which I now sit trembling and ashamed, — oh! it requires all my reason to convince me that I am not a very guilty woman and you a menacing judge."

Villefort dropped his head and sighed. "And I," he said, "I feel that my place is not in the judge's seat, but on the prisoner's stool."

"You?" said Madame Danglars, astonished.

"Yes, I."

"I think, Monsieur, that your puritanism exaggerates the situation," said Madame Danglars, whose beautiful eyes sparkled for a moment. "The paths of which you were just speaking have been traced by all young men of ardent imaginations. Besides the pleasure there is in the indulgence of our passions, there is always a little remorse; and for that reason the gospel, that eternal resource of the unhappy, has given us for our comfort — us poor women — the admirable parable of the adulterous woman. And so, I declare to you, in recalling those transports of my younger days, I think sometimes that God has forgiven them; for a compensation if not an excuse for them may be found in my sufferings. But you, — what have you to apprehend from all that, — you men, whom all the world excuses, and whom scandal ennobles?"

"Madame," replied Villefort, "you know that I am no hypocrite, or at least that I never deceive without a reason. If my brow be severe, it is because many misfortunes have clouded it; if my heart be petrified, it is that it might sustain the blows it has received. I was not so in my youth; I was not so on the night of the betrothal, when we were all seated round a table in the Rue du Cours

at Marseilles. But since then everything has changed in and about me; I am accustomed to brave difficulties, and in the conflict to crush those who by their own free will or by chance, voluntarily or involuntarily, interfere with me in my career. It is generally the case that what we most ardently desire is as ardently withheld from us by those from whom we wish to obtain it, or from whom we attempt to snatch it. Thus, the greater number of a man's errors come before him disguised under the specious form of necessity; then after error has been committed in a moment of excitement, of delirium, or of fear, we see that we might have avoided and escaped it. The means we might have used, which we in our blindness could not see, then seem simple and easy, and we say, 'Why did I not do this, instead of that?' Women, on the contrary, are rarely tormented with remorse, — for the decision does not come from you; your misfortunes are generally imposed upon you, and your faults are almost always the crimes of others."

"In any case, Monsieur, you will allow," replied Madame Danglars, "that even if the fault were mine alone, I last night received a severe punishment for it."

"Poor woman!" said Villefort, pressing her hand, "it was too severe for your strength, for you were twice overwhelmed; and yet —"

"Well?"

"Well, I must tell you. Collect all your courage, for you have not yet reached the end!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Madame Danglars, alarmed, "what is there still remaining?"

"You only look back to the past; and it is indeed bad enough. Well, picture to yourself a future more gloomy still, — certainly frightful, perhaps sanguinary!"

The baroness knew how calm Villefort naturally was

and his present excitement frightened her so much that she opened her mouth to scream, but the sound died in her throat.

"How has this terrible past been recalled?" cried Villefort; "how is it that it has escaped from the depths of the tomb and the recesses of our hearts, where it was buried, to visit us now, like a phantom, whitening our cheeks and flushing our brows with shame?"

"Alas!" said Hermine, "doubtless it is chance!"

"Chance!" replied Villefort; "no, no, Madame, there is no such thing as chance!"

"Oh, yes; is it not chance that has done all this? Was it not by chance that the Count of Monte Cristo bought this house? Was it not by chance that he caused the earth to be dug? Is it not by chance that the unfortunate child was disinterred under the trees? — that poor innocent offspring of mine, which I never even kissed, but for whom I wept many, many tears! Ah, my heart clung to the count when he mentioned the dear remains found beneath the flowers."

"Well, no, Madame! this is the terrible news I have to tell you," said Villefort, in a hollow voice. "No, nothing was found beneath the flowers; there was no child disinterred. No, you must not weep, you must not groan; you must tremble!"

"What can you mean?" asked Madame Danglars, shuddering.

"I mean that M. de Monte Cristo, digging underneath these trees, found neither skeleton nor chest, because neither of them was there!"

"Neither of them there!" repeated Madame Danglars, fixing upon him her eyes, which by their fearful dilatation indicated how much she was alarmed. "Neither of them there!" she again said, like a person who endeavors by

the utterance of words and the sound of the voice, to keep fast hold of ideas that are ready to escape.

"No!" said Villefort, burying his face in his hands, "no! a hundred times no!"

"Then you did not bury the poor child there, Monsieur? Why did you deceive me, — with what purpose? Come, speak!"

"I buried it there! But listen to me — listen — and you will pity one who has for twenty years alone borne the heavy burden of grief I am about to reveal, without casting the least portion upon you."

"My God, you frighten me! But speak; I will listen."

"You recollect that sad night, when you were half-expiring on that bed in the red damask room, while I, scarcely less agitated than you, awaited your delivery. The child was born, was given to me, without movement, without breath, without voice; we thought it dead." Madame Danglars made a startled movement, as though she would spring from her chair; but Villefort stopped her, clasping his hands as if to implore her attention. "We thought it dead," he repeated. "I placed it in the chest, which was to take the place of a coffin; I descended to the garden; I dug a hole, and hastily buried the chest. Scarcely had I covered it with mould, when the arm of the Corsican was stretched towards me; I saw a shadow rise, and at the same time a flash of light. I felt pain; I wished to cry out, but an icy shiver ran through my veins and stifled my voice; I fell lifeless, and fancied myself killed. Never shall I forget your sublime courage, when, having returned to consciousness, I dragged myself, expiring, to the foot of the stairs, where, expiring yourself, you came to meet me. We were obliged to keep silent upon the dreadful catastrophe. You had the fortitude to regain your house, assisted by your

nurse. A duel was the pretext for my wound. Though we scarcely expected it, our secret remained in our own keeping alone. I was taken to Versailles; for three months I struggled with death. At last, as I seemed to cling to life, I was ordered to the South. Four men carried me from Paris to Châlons, walking six leagues a day. Madame de Villefort followed the litter in her carriage. At Châlons I was put upon the Saone, thence I passed on to the Rhone, and drifted on the current down to Arles; at Arles I was again placed on my litter, and continued my journey to Marseilles. My convalescence lasted six months. I never heard you mentioned, and I did not dare inquire for you. When I returned to Paris, I learned that, widow of M. de Nargonne, you had married M. Danglars.

"What had been the subject of my thoughts ever since consciousness had returned to me? Always the same, — always the child's corpse, which every night in my dreams, rising from the earth, hovered above the grave with a menacing look and gesture. Immediately on my return to Paris I made inquiries; the house had not been inhabited since we left it, but it had just been let for nine years. I found the tenant. I pretended that I disliked the idea of a house belonging to my wife's father and mother passing into the hands of strangers. I offered to pay them for yielding up the lease; they demanded six thousand livres. I would have given ten thousand; I would have given twenty thousand. I had the money with me; I made the tenant sign the cancelling deed, and when I had obtained what I so much wanted, I galloped to Auteuil. No one had entered the house since I had left it. It was five o'clock in the afternoon; I ascended into the red room and waited for night. There all the thoughts which had disturbed me during my year of constant agony occurred with double force. The Corsican, who had declared the

vendetta against me, who had followed me from Nîmes to Paris, who had hid himself in the garden, who had struck me, had seen me dig the grave, had seen me inter the child; he might become acquainted with your person, — nay, he might even then have known it. Would he not one day make you pay for keeping this terrible secret? Would it not be a sweet revenge for him when he found I had not died from the blow of his dagger? It was therefore necessary before everything else, and at all risks, that I should cause all traces of the past to disappear, — that I should destroy every material vestige; too much reality would always remain in my recollection. It was for this I had annulled the lease; it was for this I had come; it was for this I was waiting. Night arrived; I waited until it was quite dark. I was without a light in that room; when the wind shook all the doors, behind which I continually expected to see some concealed spy, I trembled. I seemed everywhere to hear your moans behind me in the bed, and I dared not turn round. My heart beat so violently that I feared my wound would open. At length, one by one, all the varied noises of the neighborhood ceased. I understood that I had nothing to fear, that I should neither be seen nor heard; so I decided upon descending to the garden.

"Listen, Hermine! I consider myself as brave as most men, but when I drew from my breast the little key of the staircase, which I had found in my coat, — that little key we both used to cherish so much, which you wished to have fastened to a golden ring; when I opened the door and saw the pale moon shedding a long stream of white light on the spiral staircase like a spectre, — I leaned against the wall and nearly shrieked. I seemed to be going mad. At last I mastered my agitation. I descended the staircase step by step; the only thing I could not con-

quer was a strange trembling in my knees. I grasped the railings; if I had relaxed my hold for a moment, I should have fallen. I reached the lower door. Outside this door a spade was placed against the wall; I took it and advanced towards the thicket. I had provided myself with a dark lantern. In the middle of the lawn I stopped to light it, then I continued on my course.

"It was the end of November. All the freshness of the garden had disappeared; and the trees were nothing more than skeletons with long bony arms, and the dead leaves sounded on the gravel under my feet. My terror overcame me to such a degree as I approached the thicket that I took a pistol from my pocket and armed myself. I fancied continually that I saw the figure of the Corsican between the branches. I examined the thicket with my dark lantern; it was empty. I threw searching glances in all directions; I was indeed alone. No noise disturbed the silence of the night but the plaint of the owl, whose sharp weird cry seemed like a call to the phantoms of the night. I tied my lantern to a forked branch which I had noticed a year before at the precise spot where I stopped to dig the hole. The grass had grown very thick there during the summer, and when autumn arrived no one had been there to mow it. Still, one place less covered attracted my attention; it evidently was where I had turned up the ground. I addressed myself to the work. The hour, then, for which I had been waiting during the last year had at length arrived. How I worked, how I hoped, how I sounded every piece of turf, thinking to find some resistance to my spade! But no, I found nothing, though I made a hole twice as large as the first. I thought I had been deceived, — had mistaken the spot. I turned round, I looked at the trees, I tried to recall the details which had struck me at the time. A cold sharp wind whistled

through the leafless branches, and yet drops of perspiration fell from my forehead. I recollected that I was stabbed just as I was trampling the ground to fill up the hole. While doing so I had leaned against a false ebony-tree. Behind me was an artificial rock intended to serve as a resting-place for persons walking in the garden. In falling, my hand, relaxing its hold of the tree, had felt the coldness of this stone. On my right I saw the tree; behind me the rock. I stood in the same attitude, and threw myself down. I rose, and again began digging and enlarging the hole; still I found nothing, nothing, — the chest was not there!"

"The chest not there!" murmured Madame Danglars, choking with fear.

"Do not think that I contented myself with this one effort," continued Villefort. "No; I searched the whole thicket. I thought that perhaps the assassin, having discovered the chest, and supposing it to be a treasure, had intended carrying it off, but perceiving his error, had dug another hole and deposited it; but there was nothing. Then the idea struck me that he had not taken these precautions, and had simply thrown it in a corner. In that case I must wait for daylight to make my research. I regained the room and waited."

"Oh, Heaven!"

"When daylight dawned I went down again. My first visit was to the thicket. I hoped to find some traces which had escaped me in the dark. I had turned up the earth over a surface of more than twenty feet square, and to a depth of more than two feet. A laborer would not have done in a day what I had done in an hour. But I could find nothing, — absolutely nothing. Then I searched for the chest on the supposition that it had been thrown into some corner. That would probably be on the path which

led to the little gate; but this examination was as useless as the first, and with a bursting heart I returned to the thicket, which now contained no hope for me."

"Oh," cried Madame Danglars, "it was enough to drive you mad!"

"I hoped for a moment that it might," said Villefort; "but that good fortune was denied me. However, recovering my strength and my ideas, 'Why,' said I, 'should that man have carried away the corpse?'"

"But you said," replied Madame Danglars, "he would need it as a proof?"

"Ah, no, Madame, that could not be. Dead bodies are not kept a year; they are shown to a magistrate, and the evidence is taken. Now, nothing of the kind has happened."

"What then?" asked Hermine, trembling violently.

"Something more terrible, more fatal, more alarming for us!—the child was perhaps alive, and the assassin saved it!"

Madame Danglars uttered a piercing cry, and seizing Villefort's hands, "My child was alive!" said she; "you buried my child alive, Monsieur! You were not certain that my child was dead, and you buried it! Ah—"

Madame Danglars had risen, and stood with an expression almost threatening before the *procureur*, whose hands she wrung in her feeble grasp.

"What do I know about it? I merely suppose so, as I might suppose anything else," replied Villefort, with a stony gaze which indicated that his powerful mind was on the verge of despair and madness.

"Ah, my child, my poor child!" cried the baroness, falling on her chair, and stifling her sobs in her handkerchief.

Villefort, recovering himself, perceived that to avert

the maternal storm gathering over his head, he must inspire Madame Danglars with the terror he felt. "You understand, then, that if that were so," said he, rising in his turn, and approaching the baroness, to speak to her in a lower tone, "we are lost. This child lives; and some one knows it lives, — some one is in possession of our secret. And since Monte Cristo speaks before us of a child disinterred, when that child could not be found, it is he who is in possession of our secret."

"Just God! avenging God!" murmured Madame Danglars.

Villefort replied only by a muffled groan.

"But the child — the child, Monsieur?" repeated the agitated mother.

"How have I searched for him!" replied Villefort, wringing his hands; "how have I called him in my long sleepless nights! How have I longed for royal wealth to purchase a million of secrets from a million of men, that I might find mine among them! At last, one day when for the hundredth time I took up my spade, I asked myself again and again what the Corsican could have done with the child. A child encumbers a fugitive; perhaps on perceiving it was still alive, he had thrown it into the river."

"Impossible!" cried Madame Danglars; "a man may murder another out of revenge, but he would not deliberately drown a child."

"Perhaps," continued Villefort, "he had put it in the foundling hospital."

"Oh, yes, yes!" cried the baroness; "my child is there!"

"I hastened to the hospital and learned that the same night — the night of the 20th of September — a child had been brought there, wrapped in part of a fine linen

napkin, purposely torn in half. This portion of the napkin was marked with half a baron's crown, and the letter H."

"That was it!" cried Madame Danglars; "all my linen was marked thus. M. de Nargonne was a baron, and my name is Hermine. Thank God! my child was not dead!"

"No, it was not dead."

"And you can tell me so without fearing to make me die of joy, Monsieur? Where is it? Where is my child?"

Villefort shrugged his shoulders. "Do I know?" said he; "and do you believe that if I knew I would relate to you all its trials and all its adventures as would a dramatist or a novel-writer? Alas, no! I know not. A woman about six months after came to claim it with the other half of the napkin. This woman gave all the requisite particulars; and it was intrusted to her."

"But you should have inquired for the woman; you should have traced her."

"And how do you think, then, that I have been occupied, Madame? I feigned a criminal process, and employed all the most acute bloodhounds and skilful agents in search of her. They traced her to Châlons, and there they lost her."

"They lost her?"

"Yes, forever."

Madame Danglars had listened to this recital with a sigh, a tear, or a shriek for every circumstance. "And this is all?" said she; "and you stopped there?"

"Oh, no!" said Villefort; "I never ceased to search and to inquire. However, for the last two or three years I have allowed myself some respite. But now I will begin with more perseverance and fury than ever; and

you will see that I shall succeed, — for it is no longer conscience that drives me, it is fear."

"But," replied Madame Danglars, "the Count of Monte Cristo can know nothing, or he would not seek our society as he does."

"Oh, the wickedness of man is very great," said Villefort, "since it surpasses the goodness of God. Have you observed that man's eyes while he was speaking to us?"

"No."

"But have you ever watched him carefully?"

"Certainly. He is odd, but that is all. One thing I have noticed, — of all the exquisite things he placed before us, he touched nothing; it was always from another dish that he helped himself."

"Yes, yes!" said Villefort; "I also noticed that. If I had known what I know now, I would not have touched anything myself; I should have believed that he intended to poison us."

"And you see you would have been mistaken."

"Yes, doubtless; but believe me, that man has other projects. For that reason I wished to see you, to speak to you, to warn you against every one, but especially against him. Tell me," cried Villefort, fixing his eyes more steadfastly on her than he had done before, "did you ever reveal to any one our connection?"

"Never, to any one."

"You understand me?" replied Villefort, affectionately; "when I say any one, — pardon my urgency, — I mean to any one in the world."

"Yes, yes, I understand very well," said the baroness, blushing; "never, I swear to you."

"Were you ever in the habit of writing in the evening what had happened during the day? Do you keep a journal?"

"No; alas! my life has been passed in frivolity. I wish to forget it myself."

"Do you talk in your sleep?"

"I sleep like a child; do you not remember?" The color mounted to the baroness's face, and Villefort turned pale.

"It is true," said he, in so low a tone that he could hardly be heard.

"Well?" said the baroness.

"Well, I understand what I now have to do," replied Villefort. "In one week from this time I shall know who this M. de Monte Cristo is, whence he comes, where he goes, and why he speaks in our presence of children who have been disinterred in his garden."

Villefort pronounced these words with an accent which would have made the count shudder had he heard him. Then he pressed the hand the baroness reluctantly gave him, and led her respectfully to the door. Madame Danglars returned in another *fiacre* to the passage, on the other side of which she found her carriage, and her coachman sleeping peacefully on his box while waiting for her.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A SUMMER BALL.

THE same day, during the interview of Madame Danglars with the *procureur*, a travelling-carriage entered the Rue du Helder, passed through the gateway of No. 27, and stopped in the yard. In a moment the door was opened, and Madame de Morcerf alighted, leaning on her son's arm. Albert soon left her, ordered his horses, and having arranged his toilet, drove to the Champs Élysées, to the house of Monte Cristo. The count received him with his habitual smile. It was a strange thing that no one ever appeared to advance a step towards intimacy with that man. Those who would, so to speak, force a passage to his heart, encountered an impassable barrier. Morcerf, who ran towards him with open arms, was chilled as he drew near, in spite of the friendly smile, and ventured only to hold out his hand. Monte Cristo shook it coldly, according to his invariable practice.

"Well!" said Albert; "here I am, dear count."

"Welcome home again!"

"I arrived an hour ago."

"From Dieppe?"

"No, from Tréport."

"Ah, true!"

"And my first visit is to you."

"That is extremely kind of you," said Monte Cristo, with a tone of perfect indifference.

"Well! what is the news?"

"You should not ask a stranger, a foreigner, for news."

"I know it; but in asking for news, I mean, have you done anything for me?"

"Had you intrusted me with some commission?" said Monte Cristo, feigning uneasiness.

"Come, come!" said Albert; "do not assume indifference. It is said that there are sympathetic communications that may come from a distance, — well, at Tréport I felt the electric shock; you have either been working for me or thinking of me."

"Possibly," said Monte Cristo, "I have indeed thought of you; but the magnetic current of which I was the conductor acted, I must confess, without my knowledge."

"Indeed! pray tell me how it happened?"

"It is a simple matter, — M. Danglars dined with me."

"I know it; to avoid meeting him, my mother and I left town."

"But he dined also with M. Andrea Cavalcanti."

"Your Italian prince?"

"Not so fast; M. Andrea only calls himself viscount."

"Calls himself, do you say?"

"Yes, calls himself."

"Is he not a viscount?"

"Eh! how do I know? He calls himself so. I of course give him the same title, and every one else does the same."

"What a strange man you are! What next? You say M. Danglars dined here?"

"Yes."

"With your Vicomte Andrea Cavalcanti?"

"With Vicomte Cavalcanti, the marquis his father, Madame Danglars, Monsieur and Madame de Villefort, — charming people, — M. Debray, Maximilian Morrel, and

then who else? Wait a moment — ah! M. de Château-Renaud."

"Did they speak of me?"

"Not a word."

"So much the worse."

"Why so? I thought you wished them to forget you?"

"If they did not speak of me, I am sure they thought about me; and I am in despair."

"How will that affect you, since Mademoiselle Danglars was not among the number here who thought of you? It is true, she might have thought of you at home."

"I have no fear of that; or if she did, it was only in the same way in which I think of her."

"Touching sympathy! so you hate each other?" said the count.

"Listen!" said Morcerf. "If Mademoiselle Danglars were disposed to take pity on the martyrdom which I do not suffer on her account, and to recompense me outside of the matrimonial formalities arranged between our two families, that would suit me completely. In a word, Mademoiselle Danglars would make a charming mistress; but a wife, *diable!*"

"And this," said Monte Cristo, "is the way in which you think of your intended spouse?"

"Yes, rather brutal, it is true, but at least exact. But as this dream cannot be realized, since Mademoiselle Danglars must become my wife, — that is to say, must live with me, sing to me, compose verses and music within ten paces of me, and that for my whole life, — it frightens me. One may forsake a mistress, but a wife, good heavens! that is another thing; that is perpetual, — be she near or far away, it is a permanent thing. Now it is frightful to think of always having Mademoiselle Danglars, — even at a distance."

"You are difficult to please, Viscount."

"Yes, for I often wish for what is impossible."

"What is that?"

"To find such a wife as my father found."

Monte Cristo turned pale, and looked at Albert, while playing with some magnificent pistols.

"Your father was fortunate, then?" said he.

"You know my opinion of my mother, Count; look at her, still beautiful, still vivacious, — more than ever. For any other son to have accompanied his mother four days at Tréport would have been a bit of drudgery, a bore; but I have spent four days in her society with more satisfaction, more repose, more — poetry, shall I say? — than if I had taken Queen Mab or Titania as my companion."

"That is an overwhelming perfection; and you would make every one vow to live a single life."

"This is the reason," continued Morcerf, "why, knowing that there is in the world an accomplished woman, I am not eager to marry Mademoiselle Danglars. Have you ever noticed how much a thing is heightened in value when we obtain possession of it? The diamond which glittered in the window of Marlé or of Fossin shines with more splendor when it is our own; but if we are compelled to acknowledge the superiority of another, and still must retain the one that is inferior, do you understand what must be the suffering?"

"Worldling!" murmured the count.

"Thus I shall rejoice when Mademoiselle Eugénie perceives I am but a pitiful atom, with scarcely as many hundred thousand livres as she has millions."

Monte Cristo smiled.

"One plan occurred to me," continued Albert; "Franz likes all that is eccentric. I tried to make him fall in love with Mademoiselle Danglars; but in spite of four letters,

written in the most alluring style, he invariably answered: 'My eccentricity may be great, but it will not make me break my promise.'"

"That is what I call devoted friendship, to recommend to another one whom you would not marry yourself."

Albert smiled. "By the way," continued he, "Franz is coming soon. But that will not interest you; you dislike him, I think?"

"I!" said Monte Cristo; "my dear viscount, what has led you to think that I do not like M. Franz? I like every one."

"And you include me in the expression 'every one'? Thanks!"

"Let us not mistake," said Monte Cristo; "I love every one as God commands us to love our neighbor, — in the Christian sense; but I thoroughly hate only a few. Let us return to M. Franz d'Épinay. You say that he is coming?"

"Yes; summoned by M. de Villefort, who is apparently as anxious to get Mademoiselle Valentine married as M. Danglars is to see Mademoiselle Eugénie settled. It must be a very irksome office to be the father of a grown-up daughter; it seems to make them feverish, and that their pulse beats ninety strokes per minute until they get rid of them."

"But M. d'Épinay, unlike you, bears his misfortune patiently."

"Still more, he talks seriously about the matter, puts on a white cravat, and speaks already of his family. Besides, he has a very high opinion of Monsieur and Madame de Villefort."

"Which they deserve, do they not?"

"I believe they do. M. de Villefort has always passed for a severe but a just man."

"There is, then, one," said Monte Cristo, "whom you do not condemn as you do that poor Danglars?"

"Because I am not compelled to marry his daughter, perhaps," replied Albert, laughing.

"Indeed, my dear monsieur," said Monte Cristo, "you are revoltingly self-conceited."

"I self-conceited?"

"Yes, you; take a cigar."

"Very willingly. And how am I self-conceited?"

"Why, because here you are defending yourself, struggling to escape marrying Mademoiselle Danglars. Let things take their course; perhaps you will not be the first to withdraw."

"Bah!" said Albert, staring.

"Doubtless, Monsieur the Viscount, they will not put your neck under the yoke by force. Come, seriously, do you wish to break off your engagement?"

"I would give a hundred thousand livres to be able to do so."

"Then make yourself quite happy. M. Danglars would give double that sum to attain the same end."

"Am I, indeed, so happy?" said Albert, who still could not prevent an almost imperceptible cloud from passing over his brow. "But, my dear count, M. Danglars has reasons, then?"

"Ah! there is your proud and selfish nature. You would expose the self-love of another with a hatchet, but you shrink if your own is attacked with a needle."

"No, but it seems to me that M. Danglars —"

"Ought to be delighted with you, eh? Well, he is a man of bad taste, and is still more enchanted with another."

"With whom?"

"I do not know — study and judge for yourself."

"Thank you, I understand. Listen : my mother — no, not my mother, I mistake — my father intends giving a ball."

"A ball at this season ?"

"Summer balls are fashionable."

"If they were not, the countess has only to wish it, and they would become so."

"You are right ; you know they are unmixed balls, — those who remain in Paris in July must be true Parisians. Will you take charge of our invitation to M.M. Cavalcanti ?"

"When will it take place ?"

"On Saturday."

"M. Cavalcanti the elder will be gone."

"But the son will be here ; will you invite young M. Cavalcanti ?"

"I do not know him, Viscount."

"You do not know him ?"

"No, I have never seen him until a few days since, and am not responsible for him in any respect."

"But you receive him at your house ?"

"That is another thing ; he was recommended to me by a good abbé, who may be deceived. Give him a direct invitation, but do not ask me to present him ; if he were afterwards to marry Mademoiselle Danglars you would accuse me of intrigue, and would be challenging me, — besides, I may not be there myself."

"Where ?"

"At your ball."

"Why should you not be there ?"

"For one reason, because you have not yet invited me."

"But I come expressly for that purpose."

"You are very kind, but I may be prevented."

"If I tell you one thing you will be so amiable as to set aside all impediments."

"Tell me what it is."

"My mother begs you to come."

"The Comtesse de Morcerf?" said Monte Cristo, starting.

"Ah, Count," said Albert, "I assure you Madame de Morcerf speaks freely to me; and if you have not felt those sympathetic fibres of which I spoke just now thrill within you, you must be entirely devoid of them, for during the last four days we have spoken of no one else."

"You have talked of me?"

"Yes, that is your privilege, being a living problem."

"Then I am also a problem to your mother? I should have thought her too reasonable for such vagaries of the imagination."

"A problem, my dear count, for every one, — for my mother as well as others. Much studied, but not solved, you still remain an enigma; do not fear. My mother is always asking how it is that you are so young. I believe that while the Comtesse G—— takes you for Lord Ruthven, my mother imagines you to be Cagliostro or Comte Saint-Germain. The first opportunity you have confirm her in her opinion; it will be easy for you, as you have the philosopher's stone of the one and the wit of the other."

"I thank you for the warning," said the count; "I shall endeavor to be prepared for all suppositions."

"You will, then, come on Saturday?"

"Yes, since Madame de Morcerf invites me."

"You are very kind."

"Will M. Danglars be there?"

"He has already been invited by my father. We shall try to persuade the great D'Aguessau, M. de Villefort, to come, but have not much hope of seeing him."

"'Never despair,' says the proverb."

"Do you dance, Count?"

"I dance?"

"Yes, you; what is there surprising in that?"

"That is very well before one is above forty. No, I do not dance, but I like to see others. Does Madame de Morcerf dance?"

"Never; you can talk to her, she so much wishes to converse with you."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, truly; and I assure you, you are the only man for whom she has shown that curiosity."

Albert rose and took his hat; the count conducted him to the door. "I have one thing to reproach myself with," said he, stopping Albert on the steps.

"What is it?"

"I have spoken to you indiscreetly about Danglars."

"On the contrary, speak to me always in the same strain about him."

"Good! you reassure me. By the way, when do you expect M. d'Épinay?"

"Five or six days hence at the latest."

"And when is he to be married?"

"Immediately on the arrival of Monsieur and Madame de Saint-Méran."

"Bring him to see me. Although you say I do not like him, I assure you I shall be happy to see him."

"I will obey your orders, my Lord."

"Good-by."

"Until Saturday, when I may expect you, may I not?"

"Yes, I promised you."

The count watched Albert, waving his hand to him. When he had mounted his phaeton Monte Cristo turned, and seeing Bertuccio, "What news?" said he.

"She went to the Palais," replied the steward.

"Did she stay there long?"

"An hour and a half."

"Did she return home?"

"Directly."

"Well, my dear Bertuccio," said the count, "I now advise you to go in quest of the little estate I spoke to you of in Normandy."

Bertuccio bowed; and as his wishes were in perfect harmony with the order he had received, he started the same evening.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE INQUIRY.

M. DE VILLEFORT kept the promise he had made to Madame Danglars to endeavor to find out how the Count of Monte Cristo had discovered the history of the house at Auteuil. He wrote the same day to M. de Boville (who, from having been an inspector of prisons, was promoted to a high office in the police) for the information he desired; and the latter begged two days to ascertain who would be most likely to give him the desired information. At the end of the second day, M. de Villefort received the following note: —

"The person called M. le Comte de Monte Cristo is an intimate acquaintance of Lord Wilmore, a rich foreigner who is sometimes seen in Paris, and who is there at this moment; he is also known to the Abbé Busoni, a Sicilian priest of high repute in the East, where he has done much good."

M. de Villefort replied by ordering the strictest inquiries to be made respecting these two persons; his orders were executed, and the following evening he received these details: —

"The abbé, who was in Paris for a month, inhabited a small house behind St. Sulpice, composed of a single story over the ground-floor; two rooms were on each floor, and he was the only tenant. The two lower rooms consisted of a dining-room, with a table, chairs, and side-board of walnut, and a wainscoted parlor, without ornaments, carpet, or timepiece. It was evi-

dent that the abbé limited himself to objects of strict necessity The abbé preferred the sitting-room upstairs, which, being furnished with theological books and parchments in which he delighted to bury himself during whole months, was more a library than a parlor. His valet looked at the visitors through a sort of wicket; and if their countenances were unknown to him or displeased him, he replied that Monsieur the Abbé was not in Paris, — an answer which satisfied most persons, because the abbé was known to be a great traveller. Besides, whether at home or not, whether in Paris or Cairo, the abbé always left something to give away, which the valet distributed through this wicket in his master's name. The other room, near the library, was a bedroom. A bed without curtains, four armchairs, and a couch covered with yellow Utrecht velvet, composed, with an ottoman, all its furniture.

"Lord Wilmore resided in Rue Fontaine St. George. He was one of those English tourists who consume a large fortune in travelling. He hired his apartments furnished, passed only a few hours in the day there, and rarely slept there. One of his peculiarities was never to speak a word of French, which however he wrote with great purity."

The day after these important particulars had been furnished to the *procureur*, a man alighted from a carriage at the corner of the Rue Férou, and rapping at an olive-green door, asked if the Abbé Busoni were within.

"No, he went out early this morning," replied the valet.

"I cannot be contented with that answer," replied the visitor, "for I come from one to whom every one must be at home. But have the kindness to give the Abbé Busoni — "

"I have already told you that he is not at home!" repeated the valet.

"Then, on his return give him that card and this sealed paper. Will he be at home at eight o'clock this evening?"

"Doubtless; unless he is at work, which is the same as if he were out."

"I will come again at that time," replied the visitor, who then retired.

At the appointed hour the same man returned in the same carriage, which instead of stopping this time at the end of the Rue Férou, drove up to the green door. He knocked, and it was opened immediately to admit him. From the signs of respect the valet paid him, he saw that his note had produced the desired effect. "Is the abbé at home?" he asked.

"Yes, he is at work in his library; but he expects you, sir," replied the valet. The stranger ascended a rough staircase, and before a table illumined by a lamp whose light was concentrated by a large shade, while the rest of the apartment was in partial darkness, he perceived the abbé in a monk's dress, with a cowl on his head such as was used by learned men of the Middle Ages. "Have I the honor of addressing the Abbé Busoni?" asked the visitor.

"Yes, Monsieur," replied the abbé; "and you are the person whom M. de Boville, formerly an inspector of prisons, sends to me from the prefect of police?"

"Exactly, Monsieur."

"One of the agents appointed to secure the safety of Paris?"

"Yes, Monsieur," replied the stranger, with a slight hesitation, and blushing.

The abbé replaced the large spectacles, which covered not only his eyes but his temples, and sitting down, motioned to his visitor to do the same. "I am at your service, Monsieur," said he, with a marked Italian accent.

"The mission with which I am charged, Monsieur," replied the visitor, speaking with hesitation, "is a confi

dential one on the part of him who fulfils it and on the part of him to whom he is sent." The abbé bowed. "Your probity," replied the stranger, "is so well known to the prefect that he wishes, as a magistrate, to ascertain from you some particulars connected with the public safety; to ascertain which I am deputed to see you. It is hoped that no ties of friendship or humane consideration will induce you to conceal the truth."

"Provided, Monsieur, the particulars you wish for do not interfere with my scruples or my conscience. I am a priest, Monsieur; and the secrets of confession, for instance, must remain between me and the justice of God, and not between me and human justice."

"Do not alarm yourself, Monsieur the Abbé, we will duly respect your conscience."

At this moment the abbé, by pressing down the shade on the side nearest himself, raised it on the other and threw a bright light on the face of the stranger, while his own remained obscured.

"Excuse me, Monsieur the Abbé," said the envoy of the prefect of the police, "but the light tries my eyes very much."

The abbé lowered the shade. "Now, Monsieur," he said, "I am listening; speak!"

"I will come at once to the point. Do you know the Count of Monte Cristo?"

"You mean M. Zaccone, I presume?"

"Zaccone! is not his name Monte Cristo?"

"Monte Cristo is the name of an estate, or rather, of a rock, and not a family name."

"Well, be it so — let us not dispute about words; and since M. de Monte Cristo and M. Zaccone are the same — "

"Absolutely the same."

"Let us speak of M. Zaccone."

"Well?"

"I asked you if you know him?"

"Intimately."

"Who is he?"

"The son of a rich ship-builder in Malta."

"I know that is the report; but, as you are aware, the police does not content itself with vague reports."

"However," replied the abbé, with an affable smile, "when that report is in accordance with the truth, everybody must believe it, — the police as well as all the rest."

"But are you sure of what you assert?"

"What do you mean by that question?"

"Understand, Monsieur, I do not in the least suspect your veracity; I ask you, are you certain of it?"

"I knew his father, M. Zaccone."

"Ah, ah!"

"And when a child I often played with the son in the ship-yards."

"But whence does he derive the title of count?"

"You are aware that may be bought."

"In Italy?"

"Everywhere."

"And his wealth, which is immense according to common report —"

"Oh, as to that," said the abbé, "'immense' is the proper word."

"How much do you suppose he possesses?"

"From one hundred and fifty to two hundred thousand livres per annum."

"This is reasonable," said the visitor; "I have heard that he had three or four millions."

"Two hundred thousand per annum would make four millions of capital."

"But I was told that he had four millions per annum."

"Oh, that is not credible."

"Do you know this island of Monte Cristo?"

"Certainly; every one who has returned from Palermo, from Naples, or from Rome to France, by sea, must know it, since he has passed close to it, and must have seen it."

"I am told that it is a delightful place."

"It is a rock."

"And why has the count bought a rock?"

"For the sake of being a count. In Italy one must have a county to be a count."

"You have doubtless heard the adventures of M. Zaccone's youth?"

"The father's?"

"No, the son's."

"I know nothing certain; at that period of his life I lost sight of my young comrade."

"Did he go to war?"

"I think he entered the service."

"In what force?"

"In the navy."

"Are you not his confessor?"

"No, sir; I believe he is a Lutheran."

"A Lutheran?"

"I say I believe such is the case, I do not affirm it; besides, I believe liberty of conscience is established in France?"

"Doubtless, and we are not now inquiring into his creed, but his actions; in the name of the prefect of police, I summon you to tell me what you know of him."

"He passes for a very charitable man. Our Holy Father, the pope, has made him a chevalier of Christ — a favor accorded only to princes — for the services he rendered to

the Christians in the East; he has five or six ribbons of distinguished orders, as testimonials from Eastern monarchs for his services."

"Does he wear them?"

"No; but he is proud of them. He is better pleased with rewards given to the benefactors of man than to his destroyers."

"He is a Quaker, then?"

"Exactly; he is a Quaker, with the exception of the peculiar dress."

"Has he any friends?"

"Yes, every one who knows him is his friend."

"But has he any enemies?"

"One only."

"What is his name?"

"Lord Wilmore."

"Where is he?"

"He is in Paris just now."

"Can he give me any particulars?"

"Important ones; he was in India with Zaccone."

"Do you know his abode?"

"It is somewhere in the Chaussée d'Antin; but I know neither the street nor the number."

"Are you at variance with the Englishman?"

"I love Zaccone, and he hates him; we are consequently not friends."

"Do you think the Count of Monte Cristo had ever been in France before he made this visit to Paris?"

"To that question I can answer positively. No, Monsieur, he had never been here, because he applied to me six months since for information that he needed. In my turn, as I knew not when I might again come to Paris, I recommended M. Cavalcanti to him."

"Andrea?"

"No; Bartolomeo, his father."

"Now, Monsieur, I have but one question more to ask; and I charge you in the name of honor, of humanity, and of religion, to answer me candidly."

"What is it, Monsieur?"

"Do you know with what design M. de Monte Cristo purchased a house at Auteuil?"

"Certainly, for he told me."

"With what design, Monsieur?"

"To make a lunatic asylum of it, similar to that founded by the Baron de Pisani at Palermo. Do you know that asylum?"

"I have heard of it."

"It is a magnificent institution." Having said this, the abbé bowed to imply that he wished to pursue his studies. The visitor either understood the abbé's meaning, or had no more questions to ask; he rose, and the abbé accompanied him to the door.

"You are a great almsgiver," said the visitor; "and although you are said to be rich, I will venture to offer you something for your poor people. Will you accept my offering?"

"I thank you, Monsieur; I am jealous of only one thing; namely, that the relief I give should be entirely from my own resources."

"However —"

"My resolution, Monsieur, is unchangeable; but you have only to search for yourself, and you will find, alas! too many objects upon whom to exercise your benevolence." The abbé once more bowed as he opened the door; the stranger bowed and took his leave. The carriage conducted him straight to the house of M. de Villefort. An hour afterwards the carriage was again ordered, and this time it went to the Rue Fontaine St. George,

and stopped at No. 5, where Lord Wilmore lived. The stranger had written to Lord Wilmore, requesting an interview, which the latter had fixed for ten o'clock. As the envoy of the prefect of police arrived ten minutes before ten, he was told that Lord Wilmore, who was precision and punctuality personified, was not yet come in, but that he would be sure to return at ten exactly.

The visitor was ushered into the drawing-room, which was like all other furnished drawing-rooms. A mantelpiece, with two modern Sèvres vases; a timepiece representing Cupid with his bent bow; a looking-glass with an engraving on each side, — one representing Homer carrying his guide, the other, Belisarius begging; a grayish paper; red and black tapestry, — such was the appearance of Lord Wilmore's drawing-room. It was illuminated by lamps, with ground-glass shades, which gave only a feeble light, as if out of consideration for the weak sight of the prefect's emissary. After ten minutes' expectation the clock struck ten; at the fifth stroke the door opened, and Lord Wilmore appeared. He was rather above the middle height, with thin reddish whiskers, light complexion, and light hair, turning gray. He was dressed with all the English eccentricity, — namely, in a blue coat with gilt buttons and high collar, in the fashion of 1811, a white kerseymere waistcoat, and nankeen trousers three inches too short, but which were prevented by straps from slipping up to the knee. His first remark on entering was, "You know, Monsieur, I do not speak French?"

"I know you do not like to converse in our language," replied the envoy.

"But you may use it," replied Lord Wilmore; "for though I do not speak it, I understand it."

"And I," replied the visitor, changing his idiom, "know

enough of English to keep up the conversation. Do not put yourself to the slightest inconvenience."

"Heigh-ho!" said Lord Wilmore, with that tone which is known only to natives of Great Britain.

The envoy presented his letter of introduction, which the latter read with English coolness; and having finished, "I understand," said he, — "I understand very well."

Then began the questions, which were similar to those which had been addressed to the Abbé Busoni; but as Lord Wilmore, in the character of the count's enemy, was less restrained in his answers, they were more numerous. He described the youth of Monte Cristo, who, he said, at ten years of age entered the service of one of those petty sovereigns of India who make war on the English; it was there that Wilmore had first met him and fought against him. In that war Zaccone had been taken prisoner, sent to England, and confined in a prison-ship, whence he had escaped by swimming. Then began his travels, his duels, his passions; then came the insurrection in Greece, and he had served in the Grecian ranks. While in that service he had discovered a silver mine in the mountains of Thessaly; but he had been careful to conceal it from every one. After the battle of Navarino, when the Greek Government was consolidated, he asked of King Otho a mining grant for that district, which was given him. Hence that immense fortune, which might in Lord Wilmore's opinion amount to one or two millions per annum, — a precarious fortune which might be suddenly lost by the failure of the mine.

"But," asked the visitor, "do you know why he came to France?"

"He is speculating in railways," said Lord Wilmore; "and being a skilful chemist, and a physicist not less dis-

tinguished, he has discovered a new telegraph, which he is seeking to bring into use."

"How much does he spend yearly?" asked the prefect's emissary.

"Not more than five or six hundred thousand livres," said Lord Wilmore; "he is a miser."

Hatred evidently inspired the Englishman, who, knowing no other reproach to bring on the count, accused him of avarice.

"Do you know his house at Auteuil?"

"Certainly."

"What do you know respecting it?"

"Do you wish to know why he bought it?"

"Yes."

"The count is a speculator, who will certainly ruin himself in Utopian experiments. He supposes there is in the neighborhood of the house he has bought a mineral spring equal to those at Bagnères, Luchon, and Cauterets. He is going to turn his house into a *bad-haus*, as the Germans term it. He has already dug up all the garden two or three times to find the famous spring, and being unsuccessful, he will soon purchase all the contiguous houses. Now, as I dislike him, and hope his railway, his electric telegraph, or his search for baths will ruin him, I am watching for his discomfiture, which must soon take place."

"What was the cause of your quarrel?"

"When in England he seduced the wife of one of my friends."

"Why do you not seek revenge?"

"I have already fought three duels with him," said the Englishman; "the first with the pistol, the second with the sword, and the third with the two-handed sword."

"And what was the result of those duels?"

"The first time, he broke my arm; the second, he wounded me in the breast, and the third time, made this large wound." The Englishman turned down his shirt-collar, and showed a scar whose redness proved it to be a recent one. "So that I am his enemy, and I am sure that he will die by my hand."

"But," said the envoy, "you are not now on the way to kill him, it seems to me."

"Heigh-ho!" said the Englishman, "I practise shooting every day, and every other day Grisier comes to my house."

This was all the visitor wished to ascertain, or rather, all the Englishman appeared to know. The agent rose; and having bowed to Lord Wilmore, who returned his salutation with the stiff politeness of the English, he retired. Lord Wilmore, having heard the door close after him, returned to his bedroom, where with one hand he pulled off his light hair, his red whiskers, his false jaw, and his scar, to resume the black hair, the dark complexion, and the pearly teeth of the Count of Monte Cristo. It was M. de Villefort, and not the prefect's emissary, who returned to the house of M. de Villefort. The *procureur du roi* felt more at ease, although he had learned nothing really satisfactory; and for the first time since the dinner-party at Auteuil, he slept soundly.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE BALL.

It was in the warmest days of July, when in due course of time the Saturday arrived upon which the ball of M. de Morcerf was to take place. It was ten o'clock at night; the large trees in the garden of the count's hotel stood out distinctly against the sky, studded with golden stars, where the last mists of a storm, which had threatened all day, yet floated. From the halls on the ground-floor might be heard the sound of music, with the whirl of the waltz and galop, while brilliant streams of light shone through the openings of the Venetian blinds. At this moment the garden was occupied only by ten servants, who had just received orders from their mistress to prepare the supper, the serenity of the weather continuing to increase. Until now, it had been undecided whether the supper should take place in the dining-room or under a long tent erected on the lawn; but the beautiful blue sky covered with stars had determined the case in favor of the lawn. The gardens were illuminated with colored lanterns, according to the Italian custom; and the supper-table was loaded with wax-lights and flowers, according to the custom in all countries where the luxuries of the table are well understood.

At the time the Comtesse de Morcerf returned to the rooms after giving her orders, many guests were arriving, more attracted by the charming hospitality of the countess than by the distinguished position of the count, — for owing to the good taste of Mercédès, one was sure of finding

some arrangements at her fête worthy of relating, or even copying in case of need. Madame Danglars, in whom the events we have related had caused deep anxiety, had hesitated about going to Madame de Morcerf's, when during the morning her carriage happened to cross that of M. de Villefort. The latter made a sign; and the carriages having drawn close together, he said, "You are going to Madame de Morcerf's, are you not?"

"No," replied Madame Danglars, "I am too ill."

"You are wrong," replied Villefort, significantly; "it is important that you should be seen there."

"Do you think so?" demanded the baroness.

"I do."

"In that case I will go." And the two carriages passed on towards their different destinations.

Madame Danglars therefore came, not only beautiful in person but radiant with splendor; she entered by one door at the same time Mercédès appeared at the other. The countess sent Albert to meet Madame Danglars. He approached, paid her some well-merited compliments on her toilet, and offered his arm to conduct her to a seat. Albert looked around him.

"You are looking for my daughter?" said the baroness, smiling.

"I confess it," replied Albert. "Could you have been so cruel as not to bring her?"

"Calm yourself. She has met Mademoiselle de Villefort, and has taken her arm. See, they are following us, both in white dresses, — one with a bouquet of camellias, the other with one of myosotis. But tell me —"

"Well, what do you wish to know?"

"Will not the Count of Monte Cristo be here to-night?"

"Seventeen!" replied Albert.

"What?"

"I only mean that the count seems the rage," replied the viscount, smiling, "and that you are the seventeenth person who has asked me the same question. The count is in fashion; I congratulate him upon it."

"And have you replied to every one as you have to me?"

"Ah! to be sure, I have not answered you. Be satisfied; we shall have this lion. We are among the privileged ones."

"Were you at the opera yesterday?"

"No."

"He was there."

"Ah, indeed! And did the eccentric person commit any new originality?"

"Can he show himself without doing so? Elssler was dancing in 'Le Diable Boiteux;' the Greek princess was in ecstasies. After the *cachucha* he placed a magnificent ring on the stem of a bouquet, and threw it to the charming *danseuse*, who in the third act, to do honor to the gift, reappeared with it on her finger. And the Greek princess, will she be here?"

"No, you will be deprived of that pleasure; her position in the count's establishment is not sufficiently understood."

"Wait; leave me here, and go and speak to Madame de Villefort, who is longing to engage your attention."

Albert bowed to Madame Danglars, and advanced towards Madame de Villefort, whose lips opened as he approached. "I wager anything," said Albert, interrupting her, "that I know what you were about to say."

"Well, what is it?"

"If I guess rightly, will you confess it?"

"Yes."

"On your honor?"

"On my honor."

"You were going to ask me if the Count of Monte Cristo were arrived, or expected."

"Not at all. It is not of him that I am now thinking. I was going to ask you if you had received any news of M. Franz?"

"Yes, yesterday."

"What did he tell you?"

"That he was leaving at the same time as his letter."

"Well, now then, the count?"

"The count will come; be satisfied."

"You know that he has another name besides Monte Cristo?"

"No, I did not know it."

"Monte Cristo is the name of an island; and he has a family name."

"I never heard it."

"Well, then, I am better informed than you; his name is Zaccone."

"It is possible."

"He is a Maltese."

"That is also possible."

"The son of a ship-owner."

"Really, you should relate all this aloud; you would have the greatest success."

"He served in India, discovered a mine in Thessaly, and comes to Paris to form a mineral-water establishment at Auteuil."

"Well! I'm sure," said Morcerf, "this is indeed news! Am I allowed to repeat it?"

"Yes, but cautiously; tell one thing at a time, and do not say I told you."

"Why so?"

"Because it is a secret just discovered."

"By whom?"

"The police."

"Then the news originated —"

"At the prefect's last night. Paris, you can understand, is astonished at the sight of such unusual splendor, and the police have made inquiries."

"Good! nothing more is wanting than to arrest the count as a vagabond, on the pretext of his being too rich."

"Indeed, this would doubtless have happened if his credentials had not been so favorable."

"Poor count! And is he aware of the danger he has been in?"

"I think not."

"Then it will be but charitable to inform him. When he arrives, I will not fail to do so."

Just then a handsome young man, with bright eyes, black hair, and glossy mustache, respectfully bowed to Madame de Villefort. Albert extended him his hand. "Madame," said Albert, "allow me to present to you M. Maximilian Morrel, captain of Spahis, one of our best, and above all, of our bravest officers."

"I have already had the pleasure of meeting this gentleman at Auteuil, at the house of the Count of Monte Cristo," replied Madame de Villefort, turning away with marked coldness of manner. This answer, and above all the tone in which it was uttered, chilled the heart of poor Morrel. But a recompense was in store for him; turning round, he saw near the door a beautiful fair face, whose large blue eyes were, without any marked expression, fixed upon him, while the bouquet of myosotis was gently raised to her lips.

The salutation was so well understood that Morrel, with the same expression in his eyes, placed his handker-

chief to his mouth; and these two living statues, whose hearts beat so violently under their marble aspect, separated from each other by the whole length of the room, forgot themselves for a moment, or rather forgot the world in their mutual contemplation. They might have remained much longer lost in one another, without any one noticing their abstraction, — the Count of Monte Cristo had just entered. We have already said that there was something in the count which attracted universal attention wherever he appeared. It was not the coat, unexceptionable in its cut, though simple and unornamented; it was not the plain white waistcoat; it was not the trousers, that displayed the foot so perfectly formed, — it was none of these things that attracted the attention. It was his pale complexion, his waving black hair; it was the expression so calm and serene; it was the eye so dark and melancholy; it was the mouth, chiselled with such marvellous delicacy, which so easily expressed such high disdain, — these were what fixed all eyes upon him. Many men might have been handsomer; but certainly there could be none whose appearance was more *significant*, if the expression may be used. Everything about the count seemed to have its meaning, for the constant habit of thought which he had acquired had given to the expression of his face, and even to the most trifling gesture, an incomparable ease and force. Yet the Parisian world is so strange that even all this might not have won attention, had there not been, besides this, a mysterious story gilded by an immense fortune.

Meanwhile he advanced under a multitude of curious glances, and attended by slight salutations, to Madame de Morcerf, who, standing before a mantel-piece ornamented with flowers, had seen his entrance in a looking-glass placed opposite the door, and was prepared to receive him.

She turned towards him with a serene smile just at the moment he was bowing to her. No doubt she fancied the count would speak to her, while on his side the count thought she was about to address him; but both remained silent, and after a mere bow, Monte Cristo directed his steps to Albert, who received him cordially.

"Have you seen my mother?" asked Albert.

"I have just had the pleasure," replied the count; "but I have not seen your father."

"See, he is down there, talking politics with that little group of great geniuses."

"Indeed!" said Monte Cristo; "and so those gentlemen down there are men of great talent. I should not have guessed it. And for what kind of talent are they celebrated? You know there are different sorts."

"There is, in the first place, a scholar, — that tall dry-looking man; he discovered in the neighborhood of Rome a kind of lizard with a vertebra more than usual, and he immediately laid his discovery before the Institute. The thing was contested for a long time, but finally decided in his favor. I can assure you the vertebra made a great noise in the learned world, and the gentleman, who was only a knight of the Legion of Honor, was made an officer."

"Come," said Monte Cristo, "this cross seems to me to be wisely awarded; I suppose had he found an additional vertebra, they would have made him a commander?"

"Very likely," said Albert.

"And who can that person be who has taken it into his head to wrap himself up in a blue coat embroidered with green?"

"Oh, that coat is not his own idea; it is the republic's, which deputed David to draw a uniform for the academicians."

"Indeed!" said Monte Cristo; "so this gentleman is an academician?"

"Within the last week he has been made one of the learned assembly."

"And what is his especial talent?"

"His talent? I believe he thrusts pins into the heads of rabbits; that he makes fowls eat madder; and that he pushes out the spinal marrow of dogs with whalebone."

"And he is made a member of the Academy of Sciences for this?"

"No; of the French Academy."

"But what has the French Academy to do with all this?"

"I was going to tell you. It seems —"

"That his experiments have very considerably advanced the cause of science, doubtless?"

"No; that his style of writing is very good."

"This must be very flattering to the feelings of the rabbits into whose heads he has thrust pins, to the fowls whose bones he has dyed red, and to the dogs whose spinal marrow he has removed?"

Albert laughed.

"And the other one?" demanded the count.

"That one?"

"Yes, the third."

"Ah! in the dark blue coat?"

"Yes."

"He is a colleague of the count, and has very warmly opposed the Chamber of Peers having a uniform. He had a great oratorical success upon that question. He stood badly with the Liberal papers, but his noble opposition to the wishes of the court has recommended him to them. They talk of making him an ambassador."

"And what are his claims to the peerage?"

"He has composed two or three comic operas, written four or five articles in the 'Siècle,' and voted five or six years for the minister."

"Bravo, Viscount!" said Monte Cristo, smiling; "you are a delightful *cicerone*. And now you will do me a favor, will you not?"

"What is it?"

"Do not introduce me to any of these gentlemen; and should they wish it, you will warn me."

Just then the count felt his arm pressed. He turned round; it was Danglars. "Ah! is it you, Baron?" said he.

"Why do you call me baron?" said Danglars; "you know that I care nothing for my title. I am not like you, Viscount; you like your title, do you not?"

"Certainly," replied Albert, "seeing that without my title I should be nothing; while you, sacrificing the baron, would still remain the millionnaire."

"Which seems to me the finest title under the royalty of July," replied Danglars.

"Unfortunately," said Monte Cristo, "one's title to a millionnaire does not last for life, like that of baron, peer of France, or academician; for example, the millionnaires Frank and Poulmann, of Frankfort, who have just become bankrupts."

"Indeed!" said Danglars, becoming pale.

"Yes; I received the news this evening by a courier. I had about a million in their hands, but warned in time, I withdrew it a month ago."

"Ah," exclaimed Danglars, "they have drawn on me for two hundred thousand livres!"

"Well, you can guard against it; their signature is worth five per cent."

"Yes, but it is too late," said Danglars; "I have honored their bills."

"Good!" said Monte Cristo; "here are two hundred thousand livres gone after —"

"Hush! do not mention these things," said Danglars; then, approaching Monte Cristo, he added, "especially before young M. Cavalcanti;" after which he smiled and turned towards the young man in question.

Albert had left the count to speak to his mother, Danglars had gone to converse with young Cavalcanti; Monte Cristo was for an instant alone. Meanwhile the heat became excessive. The footmen were hastening through the rooms with trays loaded with ices. Monte Cristo wiped the perspiration from his forehead, but drew back when the waiter was presented to him; he took no refreshment. Madame de Morcerf did not lose sight of Monte Cristo; she saw the tray pass without his touching anything, and even noticed the movement with which he withdrew from it.

"Albert," she asked, "did you notice that?"

"What, Mother?"

"That the count will never accept an invitation to dine with us."

"Yes; but then he breakfasted with me, — indeed, he made his first appearance in the world on that very occasion."

"But your house is not M. de Morcerf's," murmured Mercédès; "and since he has been here I have watched him."

"Well?"

"Well, he has taken nothing yet."

"The count is very temperate."

Mercédès smiled sadly. "Approach him," said she; "and when the next tray passes, insist upon his taking something."

"But why, Mother?"

"Oblige me, Albert," said Mercédès.

Albert kissed his mother's hand and drew near to the count. Another salver passed, loaded like the preceding ones; she saw Albert attempt to persuade the count, but he obstinately refused. Albert rejoined his mother; she was very pale.

"Well," said she, "you see he refuses?"

"Yes; but why need this annoy you?"

"You know, Albert, women are singular creatures. I should like to have seen the count take something in my house, if only a morsel of pomegranate. Perhaps he cannot reconcile himself to the French style of living, and might prefer something else."

"Oh, no! I have seen him in Italy eat everything; no doubt he does not feel inclined this evening."

"And besides," said the countess, "accustomed as he is to burning climates, possibly he does not feel the heat as we do."

"I do not think that, for he has complained of feeling almost suffocated, and asked why the Venetian blinds were not opened as well as the windows."

"In fact," said Mercédès, "it suggests a way of assuring myself whether his abstinence was intended;" and she left the room. A minute afterwards the blinds were thrown open; and through the jessamine and clematis that overhung the window might be seen the garden ornamented with lanterns, and the supper laid under the tent. Dancers, players, talkers, — all uttered an exclamation of joy; every one inhaled with delight the breeze that floated in. At the same time, Mercédès reappeared, paler than before, but with that immovable expression of countenance which she sometimes wore. She went straight to the group of which her husband formed the centre. "Do not detain these gentlemen here, Count," she said; "they would

prefer, I should think, to breathe in the garden rather than suffocate here, since they are not playing."

"Ah," said a gallant old general who in 1809 had sung "Partant pour la Syrie," "we will not go alone to the garden."

"Then," said Mercédès, "I will lead the way." Turning towards Monte Cristo, she added, "Count, will you oblige me with your arm?"

The count almost staggered at these simple words; then he fixed his eyes on Mercédès. It was but the glance of a moment; but it seemed to the countess to have lasted for a century, so much was expressed in that one look. He offered his arm to the countess; she leaned upon it, or rather just touched it with her little hand, and they together descended the steps, lined with rhododendrons and camellias. Behind them, by another outlet, a group of about twenty persons rushed into the garden with loud exclamations of delight.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

BREAD AND SALT.

MADAME DE MORCERF entered an archway of trees with her companion. It was a grove of lindens conducting to a conservatory.

"It was too warm in the salon, was it not, Count?" she asked.

"Yes, Madame; and it was an excellent idea of yours to open the doors and the blinds." As he spoke these words, the count perceived that the hand of Mercédès trembled. "But you," he continued, "with that light dress, and without anything to cover you but that gauze scarf, perhaps you feel cold?"

"Do you know where I am leading you?" said the countess, without replying to the question of Monte Cristo.

"No, Madame," replied Monte Cristo; "but you see I make no resistance."

"We are going to the green-house that you see at the end of this path."

The count looked at Mercédès as if to interrogate her, but she continued her course without speaking; Monte Cristo also was silent. They reached the building, ornamented with magnificent fruits, which ripen even in July in the artificial temperature which is substituted for the warmth of the sun, which in our climate is so often obscured. The countess left the arm of Monte Cristo, and picked a bunch of Muscatel grapes. "See, Count," she said with

a smile so sad in its expression that one could almost see the tears on her eyelids, — "see; our French grapes are not to be compared, I know, with yours of Sicily and Cyprus, but you will make allowance for our northern sun."

The count bowed, and stepped back.

"Do you refuse?" said Mercédès, in a tremulous voice.

"Pray excuse me, Madame," replied Monte Cristo, "but I never eat Muscatel grapes."

Mercédès let them fall, and sighed. A magnificent peach was hanging against an adjoining wall, ripened by the same artificial heat. Mercédès drew near, and plucked the fruit. "Take this peach, then," she said.

The count again refused.

"What, again!" she exclaimed in so plaintive an accent that it seemed to suppress a sob; "really, you pain me."

A long silence succeeded this scene; the peach, like the grapes, had fallen on the ground.

"Count," said Mercédès, with a supplicating glance, "there is a beautiful Arabian custom which makes eternal friends of those who have together eaten bread and salt beneath the same roof."

"I know it, Madame," replied the count; "but we are in France, and not in Arabia. And in France eternal friendships are as rare as the custom of sharing bread and salt."

"But," said the countess, breathlessly, with her eyes fixed on Monte Cristo, whose arm she convulsively pressed with both hands, "we are friends, are we not?"

The count became pale as death; the blood rushed to his heart, and then again rising, dyed his cheeks with crimson; his eyes swam like those of a man suddenly

dazzled. "Certainly, we are friends," he replied; "why should we not be?"

The answer was so little like the one Mercédès desired that she turned away to give vent to a sigh which sounded like a groan. "Thank you," she said; and they recommenced walking. They went the whole length of the garden without uttering a word. "Monsieur," suddenly exclaimed the countess, after their walk had continued ten minutes in silence, "is it true that you have seen so much, travelled so far, and suffered so deeply?"

"I have suffered deeply, Madame," answered Monte Cristo.

"But now you are happy?"

"Doubtless," replied the count, "since no one hears me complain."

"And your present happiness, has it softened your heart?"

"My present happiness equals my past misery," said the count.

"Are you not married?" asked the countess.

"I married!" exclaimed Monte Cristo, shuddering; "who could have told you that?"

"No one told me you were; but you have frequently been seen at the opera with a young and lovely person."

"She is a slave whom I bought at Constantinople, Madame, — the daughter of a prince. I have adopted her as my daughter, having no one else to love in the world."

"You live alone, then?"

"I live alone."

"You have no sister, no son, no father?"

"I have no one."

"How can you live so, without anything to attach you to life?"

"It is not my fault, Madame. At Malta, I loved a

young girl, was on the point of marrying her, when war came and carried me away. I thought she loved me well enough to wait for me, and even to remain faithful to my grave. When I returned she was married. This is the history of most men who have passed twenty years of age. Perhaps my heart was weaker than those of others, and I suffered more than they would have done in my place, — that is all the difference."

The countess stopped for a moment, as if gasping for breath. "Yes," she said, "and you have still preserved this love in your heart, — one can love but once; and did you ever see her again?"

"Never!"

"Never?"

"I never returned to the country where she lived."

"At Malta?"

"Yes, at Malta."

"She is, then, now at Malta?"

"I think so."

"And have you forgiven her for all she has made you suffer?"

"Yes, I have pardoned *her*."

"But only her; do you, then, still hate those who separated you from her?" The countess placed herself before Monte Cristo, still holding in her hand a portion of the perfumed grapes. "Take some," she said.

"Madame, I never eat Muscatel grapes," replied Monte Cristo, as if the subject had not been mentioned before.

The countess threw the grapes into the nearest thicket with a gesture of despair. "Inflexible!" she murmured. Monte Cristo remained as unmoved as if the reproach had not been addressed to him.

Albert at this moment ran in. "Oh, Mother!" he exclaimed, "a great misfortune has happened!"

"What? what has happened?" asked the countess, as though awakening from a sleep to the realities of life. "Did you say a misfortune? Indeed, I should expect misfortunes."

"M. de Villefort is here."

"Well?"

"He comes to seek his wife and daughter."

"Why so?"

"Because Madame de Saint-Méran has just arrived in Paris, bringing the news of M. de Saint-Méran's death, which took place on the first stage of the journey from Marseilles. Madame de Villefort, who was in very good spirits, could not readily comprehend the calamity or believe that it had occurred; but Mademoiselle Valentine, at the first words, noticing certain precautions on the part of her father, guessed the whole truth; the blow struck her like a thunderbolt, and she fell senseless."

"And how was M. de Saint-Méran related to Mademoiselle de Villefort?" said the count.

"He was her grandfather on the mother's side. He was coming here to hasten her marriage with Franz."

"Ah, indeed!"

"Now, then," said Albert, "Franz has a reprieve; why is not M. de Saint-Méran also grandfather to Mademoiselle Danglars?"

"Albert! Albert!" said Madame de Morcerf, in a tone of mild reproof, "what are you saying? Ah, Count, he esteems you so highly, tell him that he has spoken amiss;" and she took two or three steps forward.

Monte Cristo looked at her so strangely, and with an expression so thoughtful and so full of affectionate admiration that she retraced her steps. Then she took his hand, and at the same time grasped that of her son, and joined them together. "We are friends; are we not?" she asked.

"Oh, Madame, I do not presume to call myself your friend; but at all times I am your most respectful servant."

The countess went away with an indescribable pang in her heart; and before she had taken ten steps the count saw her raise her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Do not my mother and you agree?" asked Albert, astonished.

"On the contrary," replied the count, "did you not hear her declare that we were friends?"

They re-entered the drawing-room, which Valentine and Monsieur and Madame de Villefort had just left. It is unnecessary to say, that Morrel had followed them.

CHAPTER XXXV.

MADAME DE SAINT-MÉRAN.

A GLOOMY scene had indeed occurred at the house of M. de Villefort. After the ladies had departed for the ball, whither all the entreaties of Madame de Villefort had failed in persuading him to accompany them, the *procureur du roi* had as usual shut himself up in his study, with a heap of papers calculated to alarm any one else, but which generally scarcely satisfied his vigorous appetite for work. But this time the papers were a mere matter of form. Villefort had secluded himself, not to study, but to reflect; and with the door locked, and having given orders that he should not be disturbed excepting for important business, he sat down in his armchair, and began to ponder over those events the remembrance of which had during the last week filled his mind with so many gloomy thoughts and bitter recollections. Then, instead of attacking the mass of papers piled before him, he opened the drawer of his desk, touched a spring, and drew out a parcel of notes, precious documents, among which he had carefully arranged, in characters known only to himself, the names of all those who, either in his political career, in money matters, at the bar, or in his mysterious love affairs, had become his enemies. Their number was formidable now that he had begun to fear, and yet these names, powerful though they were, had often caused him to smile with the same kind of satisfaction experienced by a traveller who from the summit of a mountain be-

holds at his feet the craggy eminences, the almost impassable paths, and the fearful chasms along which he has so perilously climbed. When he had run over all these names in his memory, again read and studied them, commenting meanwhile upon his lists, he shook his head. "No!" he murmured, "none of my enemies would have worked patiently and laboriously for so long a time that they might now crush me with this secret. Sometimes, as Hamlet says, —

'Deeds will rise,
Tho' all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes;'

but, like a phosphoric light, they rise but to mislead. The story has been told by the Corsican to some priest, who in his turn has also repeated it. M. de Monte Cristo may have heard it, and to enlighten himself — but why should he wish to enlighten himself upon the subject?" asked Villefort, after a moment's reflection. "What interest can this M. de Monte Cristo, M. Zaccone, son of a ship-owner of Malta, discoverer of a mine in Thessaly, now visiting Paris for the first time, — what interest can he take in discovering a gloomy, mysterious, and useless fact like this? However, amid all the incoherent details given to me by the Abbé Busoni and by Lord Wilmore, by that friend and that enemy, one thing appears to me to be clearly and definitely established, — that in no period, in no case, in no circumstance, could there have been any contact between him and me."

But Villefort uttered words which even he himself did not believe. He dreaded not the revelation so much, for he could reply to, or deny its truth; he cared little for that "Mene, Tekel, Phares," which appeared suddenly in letters of blood upon the wall; what he was really anxious for was to discover whose hand had traced it. At the moment when he was endeavoring to calm his fears, and

when, instead of dwelling upon the political future that had so often been the subject of his ambitious dreams, he was imagining a future limited to the enjoyments of home, fearing to awaken the enemy that had so long slept, the noise of a carriage sounded in the yard; then he heard the steps of an aged person ascending the stairs, followed by tears and lamentations, such as servants always assume when they wish to appear interested in their master's grief. He drew back the bolt of his door, and almost immediately an old lady entered, unannounced, carrying her shawl on her arm, and her bonnet in her hand. The white hair was thrown back from her yellow forehead, and her eyes, already sunken by the furrows of age, now almost disappeared beneath eyelids swollen with grief. "Oh, Monsieur," she said, — "oh, Monsieur, what a misfortune! I shall die of it; oh, yes, I shall certainly die of it!"

And then falling upon the chair nearest the door, she burst into a paroxysm of sobs. The servants, standing in the doorway, not daring to approach nearer, were looking at Noirtier's old servant, who, having heard the noise while in his master's room, had hastened to the scene and remained behind the others. Villefort rose, and ran towards his mother-in-law, for it was she. "Why, what can have happened?" he exclaimed. "What has thus disturbed you? Is not M. de Saint-Méran with you?"

"M. de Saint-Méran is dead!" answered the old marchioness, without preface, without expression; she appeared stupefied.

Villefort drew back, and clasping his hands together, exclaimed, "Dead! so suddenly?"

"A week ago," continued Madame de Saint-Méran, "we started together in the carriage after dinner. M. de Saint-Méran had been unwell for some days. Still, the idea of see-

ing our dear Valentine again inspired him with courage; and notwithstanding his illness, he wished to set out. When we were six leagues from Marseilles, after having eaten some of the lozenges he is accustomed to take, he fell into such a deep sleep that it appeared to me unnatural; still I hesitated to wake him, when I fancied his face became red, and that the veins in his temples throbbed more violently than usual. However, as it became dark, and I could no longer see, I let him sleep. Presently he uttered a muffled cry of distress, like that of a man suffering in his dreams, and with a sharp movement threw back his head. I stopped the postilion, I called M. de Saint-Méran, I applied my smelling-salts; but all was over, and I arrived at Aix by the side of a corpse."

Villefort stood with his mouth half open, quite stupefied. "Of course you sent for a doctor?"

"Immediately; but, as I have told you, it was too late."

"Yes; but at least he could tell of what complaint the poor marquis had died."

"Oh, yes, Monsieur, he told me; it appears to have been an apoplectic stroke."

"And what did you do then?"

"M. de Saint-Méran had always expressed a desire, in case of his death happening during his absence from Paris, that his body might be brought to the family vault. I had him put into a leaden coffin, and I am preceding him by a few days."

"Oh, poor mother!" said M. de Villefort, "to have those duties to perform after such a blow and at your age!"

"God has supported me through all! And then, the dear marquis, he would certainly have done everything for me that I performed for him. It is true that since I left him I seem to have lost my senses. I cannot weep; at my age they say that we have no more tears. Still I think

that when one is in trouble we should have the power of weeping. Where is Valentine, sir? It is on her account I am here; I wish to see Valentine."

Villefort thought it would be terrible to reply that Valentine was at a ball; so he only said that she had gone out with her stepmother, and that she should be sent for.

"This instant, sir! this instant, I beseech you!" said the old lady.

Villefort placed the arm of Madame de Saint-Méran within his own, and conducted her to his apartment. "Rest yourself, Mother," he said.

The marchioness raised her head at this word; and beholding the man who so forcibly reminded her of her deeply-regretted child, who still lived for her in Valentine, she felt touched at that word "mother," and bursting into tears, she fell on her knees before an armchair, in which she buried her venerable head. Villefort left her to the care of the women, while old Barrois ran, half-scared, to his master, — for nothing frightens old men so much as when death relaxes its vigilance over them for a moment in order to strike some other old man. Then, while Madame de Saint-Méran, still on her knees, remained praying fervently, Villefort sent for a carriage and went himself to bring his wife and daughter from Madame de Morcerf's. He was so pale when he appeared at the door of the ball-room, that Valentine ran to him, saying, —

"Oh, Father! some misfortune has happened!"

"Your grandmamma has just arrived, Valentine," said M. de Villefort.

"And grandpapa?" inquired the young girl, trembling with apprehension.

M. de Villefort replied only by offering his arm to his daughter. It was time, for Valentine's head swam, and she staggered; Madame de Villefort instantly has-

tened to her assistance, and aided her husband in dragging her to the carriage, saying, "What a singular event! Who could have thought it? Ah, yes, it is indeed strange!" And the wretched family departed, leaving a cloud of sadness hanging over the rest of the party.

At the foot of the stairs Valentine found Barrois awaiting her. "M. Noirtier wishes to see you to-night," he said in an undertone.

"Tell him I will come when I leave my dear grandmamma," she replied, feeling with true delicacy that the person to whom she could be of the most service just then was Madame de Saint-Méran.

Valentine found her grandmother in bed. Silent caresses, heartwrung sobs, broken sighs, burning tears, were all that passed in this sad interview; while Madame de Villefort, leaning on her husband's arm, maintained all outward forms of respect, at least towards the poor widow. She soon whispered to her husband, "I think it would be better for me to retire, with your permission, for the sight of me appears still to afflict your mother-in-law."

Madame de Saint-Méran heard her. "Yes, yes," she said softly to Valentine, "let her leave; but do you stay."

Madame de Villefort left, and Valentine remained alone beside the bed, for the *procureur du roi*, overcome with consternation at the unexpected death, had followed his wife. Meanwhile, Barrois had returned for the first time to old Noirtier, who, having heard the noise in the house, had, as we have said, sent his old servant to inquire the cause; on his return, his quick and intelligent eye interrogated the messenger.

"Alas, sir!" exclaimed Barrois, "a great misfortune has happened. Madame de Saint-Méran has arrived, and her husband is dead!"

M. de Saint-Méran and Noirtier had never been on strict

terms of friendship; still, the death of one old man always considerably affects another. Noirtier let his head fall upon his chest, apparently overwhelmed and thoughtful; then he closed one eye.

"Mademoiselle Valentine?" said Barrois.

Noirtier nodded his head.

"She is at the ball, as you know, since she came to say good-by to you in full dress."

Noirtier again closed his left eye.

"Do you wish to see her?"

Noirtier again made an affirmative sign.

"Well, they have gone to bring her, no doubt, from Madame de Morcerf's; I will await her return, and beg her to come up here. Is that what you wish for?"

"Yes," replied the invalid.

Barrois therefore, as we have seen, watched for Valentine and informed her of her grandfather's wish. Consequently, Valentine came up to Noirtier on leaving Madame de Saint-Méran, who in the midst of her grief had at last yielded to fatigue and fallen into a feverish sleep. Within reach of her hand they placed a small table, upon which stood a bottle of orangeade, her usual beverage, and a glass. Then, as we have said, the young girl left the bedside to see M. Noirtier. Valentine kissed the old man, who looked at her with such tenderness that her eyes again filled with tears, whose sources she thought had been exhausted. The old gentleman continued to dwell upon her with the same expression.

"Yes, yes," said Valentine, "you mean that I have yet a kind grandfather left, do you not?"

The old man intimated that such was his meaning.

"Alas! happily I have," replied Valentine. "Without that, what would become of me?"

It was one o'clock in the morning. Barrois, who wished

to go to bed himself, observed that after such sad events every one stood in need of rest. Noirtier would not say that the only rest he needed was to see his child, but wished her good-night, for grief and fatigue had made her appear quite ill.

The next morning Valentine found her grandmother in bed. The fever had not abated; on the contrary, her eyes glistened, and she appeared to be suffering from violent nervous irritability. "Oh, dear grandmamma! are you worse?" exclaimed Valentine, on perceiving all these signs of agitation.

"No, my child, no!" said Madame de Saint-Méran, "but I was impatiently waiting for your arrival, that I might send for your father."

"My father?" inquired Valentine, uneasily.

"Yes; I wish to speak to him."

Valentine did not venture to oppose her grandmother's wish, the cause of which she knew not; and an instant afterwards Villefort entered.

"Monsieur," said Madame de Saint-Méran, without using any circumlocution, and as if fearing she had no time to lose, "you wrote to me that there is a project of marriage for this child?"

"Yes, Madame," replied Villefort; "it is not only projected, but arranged."

"Your intended son-in-law is named M. Franz d'Épinay?"

"Yes, Madame."

"Is he not the son of General d'Épinay, who was on our side, and who was assassinated some days before the usurper returned from the Isle of Elba?"

"The same."

"Does he not dislike the idea of marrying the granddaughter of a Jacobin?"

"Our civil dissensions are now happily extinguished, Mother," said Villefort. "M. d'Épinay was quite a child when his father died; he knows very little of M. Noirtier, and will meet him, if not with pleasure, at least with indifference."

"Is it a suitable match?"

"In every respect."

"And the young man?"

"Possesses universal esteem."

"He is agreeable?"

"He is one of the most distinguished young men I know."

During the whole of this conversation Valentine had remained silent.

"Well, Monsieur," said Madame de Saint-Méran, after a few minutes' reflection, "I must hasten the marriage, for I have but a short time to live."

"You, Madame?" "You, dear mamma?" exclaimed M. de Villefort and Valentine at the same time.

"I know what I am saying," continued the marchioness; "I must hurry you, so that having no mother, she may at least have a grandmother to bless her marriage. I am all that is left to her belonging to my poor Renée, whom you so soon forgot, Monsieur."

"Ah, Madame," said Villefort, "you forget that I was obliged to give a mother to my child."

"A stepmother is never a mother, Monsieur. But this is not to the purpose; our business concerns Valentine. Let us leave the dead in peace."

All this was said with such rapidity that there was something in the conversation that seemed like the beginning of delirium.

"It shall be as you wish, Madame," said Villefort, — "more especially since your wishes coincide with mine; and as soon as M. d'Épinay arrives in Paris —"

"My dear mother," interrupted Valentine, "consider decorum, — the recent death. You would not have me marry under so sad auspices?"

"My child," exclaimed the old lady, sharply, "let us hear none of those conventional objections that deter weak minds from establishing firmly their future lives. I also was married at the death-bed of my mother, and certainly I have not been less happy on that account."

"Still, that idea of death, Madame!" said Villefort.

"Still? — always! I tell you I am going to die; do you understand? Well, before dying, I wish to see my son-in-law. I wish to tell him to make my child happy; I wish to read in his eyes whether he intends to obey me, — I wish to know him, in short," continued the old lady, with a fearful expression, "that I may rise from the depths of my grave and find him, if he should not fulfil his duty!"

"Madame," said Villefort, "you must lay aside these exalted ideas, which touch the border of madness. The dead, once buried in their graves, sleep there, and never rise."

"Oh, yes, yes, dear mother, calm yourself," said Valentine.

"And I tell you, Monsieur, that you are mistaken. This night I have had a fearful sleep. It seemed as though my soul were already hovering over my body. My eyes, which I tried to open, closed against my will; and what will appear impossible, especially to you, Monsieur, I saw with my eyes shut, in the spot where you are now standing, issuing from that corner where there is a door leading into Madame de Villefort's dressing-room, — I saw, I tell you, silently enter, a white figure."

Valentine screamed. "It was the fever that disturbed you, Madame," said Villefort.

"Doubt, if you please, but I am sure of what I say. I saw a white figure; and as if to prevent my discrediting the testimony of only one of my senses, I heard my glass removed, — the same which is there now on the table."

"Oh, dear mother, it was a dream."

"So little was it a dream that I stretched my hand towards the bell; but when I did so the shade disappeared. My maid then entered with a light."

"But she saw no one?"

"Phantoms are visible to those only who ought to see them. It was the soul of my husband! Well, if my husband's soul can come to me, why should not my soul reappear to guard my granddaughter? the tie is even more direct, it seems to me."

"Oh, Madame," said Villefort, deeply affected in spite of himself, "do not yield to those gloomy thoughts; you will long live with us, happy, loved, and honored, and we will make you forget — "

"Never, never, never!" said the marchioness. "When does M. d'Épinay return?"

"We expect him every moment."

"It is well. As soon as he arrives, inform me. We must be expeditious. And then I also wish to see a notary, that I may be assured that all our property returns to Valentine."

"Ah, my mother!" murmured Valentine, pressing her lips on the burning brow of her grandmother, "do you wish to kill me? Oh, how feverish you are! We must not send for a notary, but for a doctor!"

"A doctor!" said she, shrugging her shoulders, "I am not ill; I am thirsty, — that is all."

"What are you drinking, dear mamma?"

"The same as usual, my dear; my glass is there on the table. Give it me, Valentine."

Valentine poured the orangeade into a glass, and gave it to her grandmother with a certain degree of dread, for it was the same glass, she fancied, that had been touched by the spectre. The marchioness drained the glass at a single draught, and then turned on her pillow, repeating, "The notary! the notary!"

M. de Villefort left the room, and Valentine seated herself at the bedside of her grandmother. The poor child appeared herself to require the doctor she had recommended to her aged relative. A burning spot flushed her cheek, her respiration was short and difficult, and her pulse beat with feverish excitement. She was thinking of the despair of Maximilian when informed that Madame de Saint-Méran, instead of being an ally, was unconsciously acting as his enemy. More than once she thought of revealing all to her grandmother, and she would not have hesitated a single moment if Maximilian Morrel had been named Albert de Morcerf or Raoul de Château-Renaud; but Morrel was of plebeian extraction, and Valentine knew how the haughty Marquise de Saint-Méran despised all who were not noble. Her secret had always been repressed when she was about to reveal it by the sad conviction that it would be useless to do so, — for were it once discovered by her father and mother, all would be lost.

Two hours passed thus; Madame de Saint-Méran was in a feverish sleep, and the notary had arrived. Though announced in a very low tone, Madame de Saint-Méran arose from her pillow. "The notary?" she exclaimed, "let him come in!"

The notary, who was at the door, immediately entered. "Go, Valentine," said Madame de Saint-Méran, "and leave me with this gentleman."

"But, Mother —"

"Leave me! go!" The young girl kissed her grand-

mother, and left with her handkerchief to her eyes; at the door she found the *valet de chambre*, who told her the doctor was waiting in the dining-room. Valentine instantly ran down. The doctor was a friend of the family, and at the same time one of the cleverest men of the day, and very fond of Valentine, whose birth he had witnessed. He had himself a daughter of about her age, whose mother had been consumptive; his life was continually disturbed by fear on account of his child.

"Oh," said Valentine, "we have been waiting for you with such impatience, dear M. d'Avrigny. But first of all, how are Madeleine and Antoinette?"

Madeleine was the daughter of M. d'Avrigny, and Antoinette his niece. M. d'Avrigny smiled sadly. "Antoinette is very well," he said, "and Madeleine tolerably so. But you sent for me, my dear child. It is not your father or Madame de Villefort who is ill? As for you, although it is obvious that we cannot get rid of our nerves, I fancy you have no further need of me than to recommend you not to allow your imagination to take too wide a field."

Valentine colored. M. d'Avrigny carried the science of divination almost to a miracle, for he was one of those doctors who always work upon the body through the mind. "No," she replied, "it is for my poor grandmother; you know the calamity that has happened to us, do you not?"

"I know nothing," said M. d'Avrigny.

"Alas!" said Valentine, restraining her tears, "my grandfather is dead."

"M. de Saint-Méran?"

"Yes."

"Suddenly?"

"From an apoplectic stroke."

"An apoplectic stroke?" repeated the doctor.

"Yes; and my poor grandmother fancies that her husband, whom she never left, has called her, and that she must go and join him. Oh, M. d'Avrigny, I beseech you, do something for her!"

"Where is she?"

"In her room, with the notary."

"And M. Noirtier?"

"Just as he was; his mind is perfectly clear, but he is still motionless and dumb."

"And he has the same love for you, eh, my dear child?"

"Yes," said Valentine; "he is very fond of me."

"Who does not love you?"

Valentine smiled sadly.

"What are your grandmother's symptoms?"

"An extreme nervous excitement, and a strangely agitated sleep. She fancied this morning in her sleep that her soul was hovering above her body, which she at the same time watched; it must have been delirium. She fancies too that she saw a phantom enter her chamber, and even heard the noise it made on touching her glass."

"It is singular," said the doctor; "I was not aware that Madame de Saint-Méran was subject to such hallucinations."

"It is the first time I ever saw her thus," said Valentine. "And this morning she frightened me so that I thought her mad; and my father, who, you know, is a strong-minded man, himself appeared deeply impressed."

"We will go and see," said the doctor; "what you tell me seems very strange."

The notary here descended, and Valentine was informed that her grandmother was alone. "Go upstairs," she said to the doctor.

"And you?"

"Oh, I dare not, — she forbade my sending for you; and, as you say, I am myself agitated, feverish, and unwell. I will go and take a turn in the garden to recover myself."

The doctor pressed Valentine's hand; and while he went up to her grandmother, she descended the steps. We need not say which portion of the garden was her favorite walk. After remaining for a short time in the *parterre* surrounding the house, and gathering a rose to place in her waist or hair, it was her wont to turn into the dark avenue which led to the bank, and from the bank to go to the gate. As usual, Valentine strolled for a short time among her flowers, but without gathering them. The mourning in her heart forbade her assuming this simple ornament, though she had not yet had time to put on the outward semblance of woe. She then turned towards the avenue. As she advanced she fancied she heard a voice pronounce her name. She stopped, astonished; then the voice reached her ear more distinctly, and she recognized it as that of Maximilian.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE PROMISE.

It was indeed Maximilian Morrel, who had passed a wretched existence since the previous day. With the instinct peculiar to lovers, he had anticipated, after the return of Madame de Saint-Méran and the death of the marquis, that something would occur at M. de Villefort's of interest to him as Valentine's lover. His presentiments were realized, as we shall see, and it was no longer a simple uneasiness which led him, pale and trembling, to the gate under the chestnut-trees. Valentine had not been informed that Morrel was waiting; and as it was not his accustomed hour for visiting her, pure chance, or rather a happy sympathy, led her at the moment to that spot. Morrel called her, and she ran to the gate. "You here at this hour?" said she.

"Yes, my poor girl," replied Morrel; "I come to bring and to hear bad tidings."

"This is indeed a house of mourning!" said Valentine; "speak, Maximilian, although the cup of sorrow seems already full."

"Dear Valentine," said Morrel, endeavoring to conceal his own emotion, "listen, I entreat you; what I am about to say is solemn. When are you to be married?"

"I will tell you all," said Valentine; "from you I have nothing to conceal. This morning the subject was introduced; and my dear grandmother, on whom I had counted as a support on whom I could rely, not only declared herself

favorable to it, but is so anxious for it that they only await the arrival of M. d'Épinay, and the following day the contract will be signed."

A deep sigh escaped the young man, who gazed long and mournfully at her whom he loved. "Alas!" he said in a low voice, "it is frightful to hear such words spoken tranquilly by the woman one loves: 'The time of your execution is appointed; in a few hours it will take place. But it is of no consequence; it must be so, and I will not interfere to prevent it.' Well, since, as you say, nothing remains but for M. d'Épinay to arrive, that the contract may be signed, since on the day after his arrival you will belong to him, — to-morrow you will be engaged to M. d'Épinay, for he came this morning to Paris."

Valentine uttered a cry.

"I was at the house of Monte Cristo an hour since," said Morrel; "we were speaking, he of the sorrow your family had experienced, and I of your grief, when a carriage rolled into the courtyard. Never till then had I placed any confidence in presentiments, but now I cannot help believing them, Valentine. At the sound of that carriage I shuddered; soon I heard steps on the staircase, which terrified me as much as the footsteps of the commander did Don Juan. The door at last opened; Albert de Morcerf entered first, and I began to discredit my fears, when after him another young man advanced, and the count exclaimed, 'Ah! M. le Baron Franz d'Épinay!' I summoned all my strength and courage to my support. Perhaps I turned pale, perhaps I trembled; but I am sure that I continued to smile with my lips. Five minutes later I departed, without having heard a word that had been spoken in those five minutes, — I was annihilated!"

"Poor Maximilian!" murmured Valentine.

"Valentine, the time has arrived when you must answer

me. And remember, my life depends on your answer What do you intend doing?"

Valentine held down her head; she was overwhelmed.

"Listen!" said Morrel; "it is not the first time you have contemplated our present position, which is a serious and urgent one. I do not think it is a moment to give way to useless sorrow; leave that for those who like to suffer at their ease and drink their tears at leisure. There are such persons in the world, and God will doubtless reward them in heaven for their resignation on earth; but those who mean to contend must not lose one precious moment, but must return immediately the blow which fortune strikes. Do you intend to struggle against our ill-fortune? Tell me, Valentine, for it is that which I have come to ask."

Valentine trembled, and stared at Morrel in terror. The idea of resisting her father, her grandmother, and all the family, had never occurred to her. "What do you say, Maximilian?" asked Valentine. "What do you term a struggle? Oh, it would be a sacrilege! What! I resist my father's order and my dying grandmother's wish? Impossible!" Morrel started. "You are too noble not to understand me, and you understand me so well that you already yield, dear Maximilian. No, no! I shall need all my strength to struggle with myself and to drink my tears, as you say. But to grieve my father; to disturb my grandmother's last moments, — never!"

"You are right," said Morrel, calmly.

"Good heavens! in what a tone you say that!" said Valentine, wounded.

"I speak as one who admires you, Mademoiselle."

"Mademoiselle!" cried Valentine; "Mademoiselle! Oh, selfish man! he sees me in despair, and pretends he cannot understand me!"

"You mistake; I understand you perfectly. You will not oppose M. de Villefort; you will not displease the marchioness; and to-morrow you will sign the contract which will bind you to your husband."

"But tell me, how can I do otherwise?"

"Do not appeal to me, Mademoiselle. I shall be a bad judge in such a case; my selfishness will blind me," replied Morrel, whose low voice and clinched hands showed his increasing exasperation.

"What then would you have proposed, Morrel, had you found me willing to accede? Come, answer me. It is not a time to tell me I am doing wrong; you must give me your advice."

"Do you say that to me seriously, Valentine, — that I ought to advise you?"

"Certainly, dear Maximilian, for if it is good, I will follow it; you know my devotion to you."

"Valentine," said Morrel, pushing aside a plank already loose, "give me your hand in proof that you forgive my anger; my senses are confused, and during the last hour the most extravagant thoughts have passed through my brain. Oh! if you refuse my advice — "

"What do you advise?" said Valentine, raising her eyes to heaven, and sighing.

"I am free," replied Maximilian, "and rich enough to support you. I swear to make you my lawful wife before my lips shall approach your forehead."

"You make me tremble!" said the young girl.

"Follow me," said Morrel; "I will take you to my sister, who is worthy to be yours also. We will embark for Algiers, for England, for America, or if you prefer it, retire to the country and not return to Paris until our friends have reconciled your family."

Valentine shook her head. "I feared it, Maximilian."

said she; "it is the counsel of a madman, and I should be more mad than you did I not stop you at once with the single word, 'Impossible, Morrel, impossible!'"

"You will then submit to what fate decrees for you without even attempting to contend against it?" said Morrel, sorrowfully.

"Yes, — if I die!"

"Well, Valentine," resumed Maximilian, "I say again, you are right. Truly, it is I who am mad; and you prove to me that passion blinds the most correct minds. I thank you therefore, who can reason without passion. It is, then, understood, — to-morrow you will be irrevocably promised to M. Franz d'Épinay, not only by that theatrical formality invented to heighten the effect of a comedy, and which is called the signing of the contract, but by your own will?"

"Again you drive me to despair, Maximilian," said Valentine; "again you turn the dagger in the wound! What would you do — tell me — if your sister listened to such a proposition?"

"Mademoiselle," replied Morrel, with a bitter smile, "I am selfish; you have already said so. And as a selfish man, I think not of what others would do in my situation, but of what I intend doing myself. I think only that I have known you now a whole year. From the day I first saw you I committed all my hopes of happiness to the possibility that I might win your love. One day you acknowledged that you loved me; and since that day my hopes have centred in the desire to possess you, — that was my life. Now, I think no more; I say only that fortune has turned against me. I had thought to gain heaven, and I have lost it. It is an every-day occurrence for a gambler to lose not only what he has, but also what he has not."

Morrel pronounced these words with perfect calmness; Valentine looked at him a moment with her large, searching eyes, endeavoring not to let Morrel discover the grief which struggled in her heart. "But, in a word, what are you going to do?" asked she.

"I am going to have the honor of saying adieu to you, Mademoiselle, calling God to witness, who hears my words and who reads my secret thoughts, that I wish your life may be so calm, so happy, and so fully occupied, that there may be no place in it for remembrance of me."

"Oh!" murmured Valentine.

"Adieu, Valentine, adieu!" said Morrel, bowing.

"Where are you going?" cried the young girl, extending her hand through the opening, and seizing Maximilian by his coat, for she understood from her own agitated feelings that her lover's calmness could not be real, — "where are you going?"

"I am going to take a course by which I shall avoid bringing additional trouble into your family, and to set an example which every honest and devoted man, situated as I am, may follow."

"Before you leave me, tell me what you are going to do, Maximilian."

The young man smiled sorrowfully.

"Speak! speak!" said Valentine; "I entreat you."

"Has your resolution changed, Valentine?"

"It cannot change, unhappy man! you know it must not!" cried the young girl.

"Then adieu, Valentine!"

Valentine shook the gate with an energy of which she would have been thought incapable, and as Morrel was going away, she thrust both her hands through the opening, clasping them and turning her arms. "I must know what you mean to do?" said she. "Where are you going?"

"Oh, fear not!" said Maximilian, stopping at a short distance; "I do not intend to render another man responsible for the rigorous fate reserved for me. Another might threaten to seek M. Franz, to provoke him, and to fight with him; all that would be folly. What has M. Franz to do with it? He saw me this morning for the first time, and has already forgotten he has seen me. He did not even know that I was in existence when it was arranged by your two families that you should be united. I have no enmity against M. Franz, and promise you the punishment shall not fall on him."

"On whom, then, — on me?"

"On you, Valentine? Oh, Heaven forbid! Woman is sacred; the woman one loves is holy."

"On yourself, then, unhappy man, — on yourself?"

"I am the only guilty person, am I not?" replied Maximilian.

"Maximilian!" said Valentine, "Maximilian, return, I entreat you!"

He drew near, with his sweet smile, and but for his paleness one might have thought him in his usual happy frame. "Listen, my dear, my adored Valentine," said he, in his melodious and grave tone; "those who, like us, have never had a thought for which they need blush before the world, before their family friends, or before God, are able to read in one another's hearts as in an open book. I never was romantic, and am no melancholy hero. I imitate neither Manfred nor Anthony; but without words, without protestations, and without vows, my life has entwined itself with yours. You leave me, and you are right in doing so, — I repeat it, you are right; but in losing you, I lose my life. The moment you leave me, Valentine, I am alone in the world. My sister is happily married; her husband is only my brother-in-law, — that is, a man

whom the ties of social life alone attach to me. No one, then, longer needs my useless life. This is what I shall do : I will wait until the very moment you are married, for I will not lose the shadow of one of those unexpected chances which are sometimes reserved for us, — for after all, M. Franz may die before that time. A thunderbolt may fall on the altar as you approach it ; nothing appears impossible to one condemned to die, and miracles appear quite reasonable when his escape from death is concerned. I will, then, wait until the last moment, and when my misery is certain, irremediable, hopeless, I will write a confidential letter to my brother-in-law, another to the prefect of police, to acquaint them with my intention ; and at the corner of some wood, on the brink of some abyss, on the bank of some river, I will put an end to my existence, as certainly as I am the son of the most honest man who ever lived in France."

Valentine trembled convulsively ; she loosed her hold of the gate, her arms fell by her side, and two large tears rolled down her cheeks. The young man stood before her, sorrowful and resolute.

"Oh ! for pity's sake," said she, "you will live, will you not ? "

"No ! on my honor," said Maximilian ; "but that will not affect you. You will have done your duty, and your conscience will be at rest."

Valentine fell on her knees and pressed her almost bursting heart. "Maximilian ! " said she, "Maximilian, my friend, my brother on earth, my true husband in heaven, I entreat you, do as I do, live in suffering ; perhaps we may one day be united."

"Adieu, Valentine," repeated Morrel.

"My God," said Valentine, raising both her hands to heaven with a sublime expression, "I have done my

utmost to remain a submissive daughter, — I have begged, entreated, implored; he has regarded neither my prayers, my entreaties, nor my tears. It is done," cried she, wiping away her tears, and resuming her firmness; "I am resolved not to die of remorse, I will rather die of shame. You will live, Maximilian, and I will belong to no one but you. At what hour? At what moment? Shall it be immediately? Speak, command! I am ready."

Morrel, who had already gone some steps away, again returned, and pale with joy, extended both hands towards Valentine through the opening. "Valentine," said he, "dear Valentine, you must not speak thus, — rather let me die. Why should I obtain you by violence, if our love is mutual? Is it from mere humanity you bid me live? I would then rather die."

"Truly," murmured Valentine, "who on this earth cares for me, if he does not? Who has consoled me in my sorrow but he? On whom do my hopes rest? On whom does my bleeding heart repose? On him, on him; always on him! Yes, you are right; Maximilian, I will follow you. I will leave the paternal home, I will give up all. Oh, ungrateful girl that I am," cried Valentine, sobbing, "I will give up all, even my dear old grandfather, whom I had forgotten."

"No," said Maximilian, "you shall not leave him. M. Noirtier has evinced, you say, a kind feeling towards me. Well, before you leave, tell him all; his consent would be your justification in God's sight. As soon as we are married, he shall come and live with us; instead of one child, he shall have two. You have told me how you talk to him and how he answers you; I shall very soon learn that language by signs, Valentine. Oh, I promise you solemnly that instead of despair, it is happiness that awaits us."

"Oh, see, Maximilian, see the power you have over me! You almost make me believe you; and yet what you tell me is madness, for my father will curse me. He is inflexible, — he will never pardon me. Now listen to me, Maximilian; if by artifice, by entreaty, by accident, — in short, if by any means I can delay this marriage, will you wait?"

"Yes, I promise you, as you also promise me, that this horrible marriage shall not take place, and that if you are dragged before a magistrate or a priest, you will refuse."

"I swear it to you by that which is most sacred to me in the world, — by my mother."

"We will wait, then," said Morrel.

"Yes, we will wait," replied Valentine, who revived at these words; "there are so many things which may save unhappy beings such as we are."

"I rely on you, Valentine," said Morrel; "all that you do will be well done. Only if they disregard your prayers, if your father and Madame de Saint-Méran insist that M. d'Épinay should be called to-morrow to sign the contract — "

"Then you have my promise, Morrel."

"Instead of signing — "

"I will rejoin you, and we will fly; but from this moment until then, let us not tempt Providence, Morrel; let us not see each other. It is a miracle, it is a providence that we have not been discovered; if we were surprised, if it were known that we meet thus, we should have no further resource."

"You are right, Valentine; but how shall I ascertain — "

"From the notary, M. Deschamps."

"I know him."

"And from me; I will write to you, depend on me. I dread this marriage, Maximilian, as much as you do."

"Thank you, my adored Valentine, thank you; that is

enough. When once I know the hour, I will hasten to this spot; you can easily get over this fence with my assistance, a carriage will await us at the gate, in which you will accompany me to my sister's. There living, retired or mingling in society, as you wish, we shall be enabled to use our power to resist oppression, and will not suffer ourselves to be put to death like sheep, which defend themselves only by sighs."

"Agreed," said Valentine. "I will say to you as you said to me: Maximilian, all that you do will be well done."

"Oh!"

"Well! are you satisfied with your wife?" asked the young girl, sorrowfully.

"My adored Valentine, to say yes is to say but little."

"Say it, however."

Valentine had approached, or rather had placed her lips so near the fence that they nearly touched those of Morrel, which were pressed against the other side of the cold and inexorable barrier.

"Good-by, then, till we meet again," said Valentine, tearing herself away.

"I shall hear from you?"

"Yes."

"Thanks, thanks, dear love, good-by!" The sound of a kiss, innocent and wasted, was heard; and Valentine fled through the avenue. Morrel listened to catch the last sound of her dress brushing the branches, and of her footstep on the path, then raised his eyes with an ineffable smile of thankfulness to heaven for being permitted to be thus loved; and then he also disappeared. The young man returned home and waited all the evening and all the next day without receiving anything. It was only on the following day, at about ten o'clock in the morning, as he was starting to call on M. Deschamps, the notary,

that he received from the postman a small billet, which he knew to be from Valentine, although he had not before seen her writing. It was to this effect : —

Tears, entreaties, prayers, have availed me nothing. Yesterday, for two hours, I was at the church of St. Philippe du Roule, and for two hours I prayed to God from the depths of my soul. Heaven is as inflexible as man; and the signing of the contract is appointed for this evening at nine o'clock. I have but one promise and but one heart to give. That promise is pledged to you; that heart is yours. This evening, then, at quarter of nine, at the gate. Your betrothed,

VALENTINE DE VILLEFORT.

P. S. — My poor grandmother gets worse and worse. Yesterday her fever amounted to delirium ; to-day her delirium is almost madness. You will be very kind to me, will you not, Morrel, to make me forget my sorrow in leaving her thus ? I think it is kept a secret from Grandpapa Noirtier that the contract is to be signed this evening.

Morrel was not satisfied with the information received from Valentine; he went to the notary, who confirmed to him the news that the signing of the contract was to take place at nine o'clock that evening. Then he went to call on Monte Cristo, and heard still more. Franz had been to announce the solemnity, and Madame de Villefort had also written to beg the count to excuse her not inviting him; the death of M. de Saint-Méran and the dangerous illness of his widow would cast a gloom over the meeting which she would regret that the count should share, whom she wished might enjoy every happiness. The day before, Franz had been presented to Madame de Saint-Méran, who had left her bed to receive him, but had been obliged to return to it immediately after. It is easy to suppose that Morrel's agitation would not escape the count's penetrating eye. And therefore Monte Cristo was more

affectionate than ever; indeed, his manner was so kind that several times Morrel was on the point of telling him all. But he recalled the promise he had made to Valentine, and kept his secret. The young man read Valentine's letter twenty times in the course of the day. It was her first; and on what an occasion! Each time he read it he renewed his vow to make her happy. How great is the authority of a young girl who has made so courageous a resolution! What devotion does she deserve from him to whom she has sacrificed everything! How ought she to be, in fact, to her lover the first and most worthy object of his worship! She becomes at once a queen and a wife; and it is impossible to thank and love her sufficiently. Morrel thought with indescribable agitation of the moment when Valentine should draw near, saying, "Here I am, Maximilian; take me." He had arranged everything for her escape: two ladders were hidden in the clover-field; a cabriolet which Maximilian himself was to drive was in waiting, — without a servant, without lights; at the turning of the first street they would light the lamps, as it would be foolish to attract the notice of the police by too many precautions. Occasionally he shuddered; he thought of the moment when from the top of that wall he should protect the descent of Valentine, and when he should hold her, trembling and unresisting, in his arms, — her whose hand only he had pressed, and whom he had kissed only on the tips of her fingers.

When the afternoon arrived, and he saw that the hour was drawing near, he wished for solitude. His blood boiled; the trivial questions, even the voice alone, of a friend would have irritated him. He shut himself in his room, and tried to read; but his eye glanced over the page without recognizing the words, and finally he threw away the book, and for the second time sat down to sketch

his plan, the ladders, and the fence. At length the hour was at hand. Never did a man deeply in love allow the clocks to go on peacefully. Morrel tormented his so effectually that they indicated half-past eight at six o'clock. He then said, "It is time to start; the signature was indeed fixed to take place at nine o'clock, but perhaps Valentine will not wait for that." Consequently, Morrel, having left the Rue Meslay at half-past eight by his timepiece, entered the clover-field while the clock of St. Philippe du Roule was striking eight. The horse and cabriolet were concealed behind a small ruin, where Morrel had often waited. The night gradually drew on, and the foliage in the garden assumed a deeper hue. Then Morrel came out from his hiding-place with a beating heart, and looked through the small opening in the paling; there was no one to be seen. The clock struck half-past eight; and still another half-hour was passed in waiting, while Morrel looked to and fro, and gazed more and more frequently through the opening. The garden became darker still, but in the darkness he looked in vain for the white dress; and in the silence he vainly listened for the sound of footsteps. The house, which was discernible through the trees, remained in darkness, and gave no indication that so important an event as the signature of a marriage-contract was going on. Morrel looked at his watch, which indicated quarter of ten; but soon the same clock he had already heard strike two or three times rectified the error of his watch by striking half-past nine. This was already half an hour after the time Valentine had herself appointed. It was a terrible moment for the young man's heart, on which each second fell like a leaden mallet. The slightest rustling of the foliage, the least whistling of the wind attracted his attention and drew the perspiration to his brow; then he tremblingly fixed his ladder, and

not to lose a moment, placed his foot on the first step. Amid all these alternations of hope and fear, the clock struck ten. "It is impossible," said Maximilian, "that the signing of a contract should occupy so long a time, without unexpected interruptions. I have weighed all the chances, calculated the time required for all the forms; something has happened." And then he walked rapidly to and fro, and pressed his burning forehead against the fence. Had Valentine fainted after the signing of the contract; or had she been discovered and stopped in her flight? These were the only explanations the young man could conjecture, — both of them without hope.

The idea which fixed his attention was that Valentine's strength had failed her in attempting to escape, and that she had fainted in one of the paths. "Oh! if that is the case," he cried, running up to the top of the ladder, "I should lose her, and by my own fault." The demon which had whispered that idea to him did not leave him, and buzzed in his ear with a persistence which after a moment changed surmises to convictions. His eyes, searching the increasing darkness, seemed to perceive something lying on the shaded path. He ventured to call, and it seemed to him that the wind wafted back an inarticulate sigh. At last the half-hour struck. It was impossible to wait longer. His temples throbbed violently; his eyes were growing dim. He passed one leg over the wall, and in a moment leaped down on the other side. He was on Villefort's premises, had arrived there by scaling the wall. What might be the consequences? However, he had not ventured thus far to draw back. He went a short distance close under the wall, then crossed a path, and entered a clump of trees. In a moment he had passed through them, and could see the house dis-

Morrel was convinced of one thing; in-

stead of lights at every window, as is customary on days of ceremony, he saw only a gray mass, which was veiled also by a cloud, which at that moment obscured the moon's feeble light. A light moved rapidly from time to time past three windows of the first floor. These three windows were in Madame de Saint-Méran's room. Another remained motionless behind some red curtains which were in Madame de Villefort's bedroom. Morrel understood all this. So many times, in order to follow Valentine in thought at every hour in the day, had he made her describe all the house that without having seen it, he knew it all.

This darkness and silence alarmed Morrel still more than Valentine's absence had done. Almost mad with grief, and determined to venture everything in order to see Valentine once more, and to assure himself in regard to the misfortune he feared, Morrel gained the edge of the clump of trees, and was going to pass as quickly as possible through the flower-garden, when the sound of a voice still at some distance, but which was borne upon the wind, reached him. At this sound, as he was already partially exposed to view, he stepped back and concealed himself completely, remaining motionless and still. He had formed his resolution : if it was Valentine alone, he would speak as she passed ; if she was accompanied, and he could not speak, still he should see her and know that she was safe ; if they were strangers, he would listen to their conversation, and might understand something of this hitherto incomprehensible mystery.

The moon had just then escaped from behind the cloud which had concealed it, and Morrel saw Villefort come out upon the steps, followed by a gentleman in black. They descended, and advanced towards the clump of trees, Morrel soon recognized the other gentleman as Dr. rigny. On seeing them approach, he drew back me-

chanically, until he found himself stopped by a sycamore tree in the centre of the clump; there he was compelled to remain. Soon the two gentlemen stopped also.

"Ah, my dear doctor," said the *procureur*, "Heaven declares itself against my house! What a dreadful death; what a blow! Seek not to console me! Alas! nothing can alleviate so great a sorrow; the wound is too deep and too fresh! She is dead! she is dead!"

A cold dampness covered the young man's brow, and his teeth chattered. Who, then, was dead in that house, which Villefort himself had called accursed?

"My dear M. de Villefort," replied the doctor, with a tone which redoubled the terror of the young man, "I have not led you here to console you; on the contrary —"

"What can you mean?" asked the *procureur*, alarmed.

"I mean that behind the misfortune which has just happened to you, there is another, perhaps still greater."

"Oh, my God!" murmured Villefort, clasping his hands. "What are you going to tell me?"

"Are we quite alone, my friend?"

"Yes, quite; but why all these precautions?"

"Because I have a terrible secret to communicate to you," said the doctor. "Let us sit down."

Villefort fell, rather than seated himself. The doctor stood before him, with one hand placed on his shoulder. Morrel, horrified, supported his head with one hand, and with the other pressed his heart, lest its beatings should be heard. "Dead! dead!" repeated he within himself; and he felt as if he were also dying.

"Speak, Doctor! I am listening," said Villefort; "strike! I am prepared for everything!"

"Madame de Saint-Méran was doubtless advancing in years, but she enjoyed excellent health."

Morrel, for the first time in ten minutes, breathed freely.

"Grief has consumed her," said Villefort, — "yes, grief, Doctor! After living forty years with the marquis — "

"It is not grief, my dear Villefort," said the doctor; "grief may kill, although it rarely does, but never in a day, never in an hour, never in ten minutes."

Villefort answered nothing; he simply raised his head, which had been cast down before, and looked at the doctor with amazement.

"Were you present during the last struggle?" asked M. d'Avrigny.

"I was," replied the *procureur;* "you begged me not to leave."

"Did you notice the symptoms of the disease to which Madame de Saint-Méran has fallen a victim?"

"I did. Madame de Saint-Méran had three successive attacks at intervals of some minutes, each one more serious than the former. When you arrived, Madame de Saint-Méran had already been panting for breath some minutes. She then had a fit, which I took to be simply a nervous attack; and it was only when I saw her raise herself in the bed, and her limbs and neck appear stiffened, that I became really alarmed. Then I understood from your countenance there was more to fear than I had thought. This crisis past, I endeavored to catch your eye, but could not. You held her hand, — you were feeling her pulse, — and the second fit came on before you had turned towards me. This was more terrible than the first; the same nervous movements were repeated, and the mouth contracted and turned purple."

"And at the third she expired."

"At the end of the first attack I discovered symptoms of tetanus; you confirmed my opinion."

"Yes, before others," replied the doctor; "but now we are alone."

"Oh, heavens! what are you going to tell me?"

"That the symptoms of tetanus and poisoning by vegetable substances are the same."

M. de Villefort started from his seat, then in a moment fell down again, silent and motionless. Morrel knew not if he were dreaming or awake.

"Listen," said the doctor; "I know the full importance of the statement I have just made, and the character of the man to whom I have made it."

"Do you speak to me as a magistrate or as a friend?" asked Villefort.

"As a friend, and only as a friend, at this moment. The similarity in the symptoms of tetanus and poisoning by vegetable substances is so great that were I obliged to affirm by oath what I have now stated, I should hesitate; I therefore repeat to you, I speak not to a magistrate, but to a friend. And to that friend I say, during the three-quarters of an hour that the struggle continued I watched the agony, the convulsions, the death of Madame de Saint-Méran, and I am not only satisfied that she died of poison, but I could name, — yes, I could name the poison that killed her."

"Monsieur! Monsieur!"

"The symptoms are marked, do you see? — sleep disturbed by nervous fits, excitement of the brain, torpor of the system. Madame de Saint-Méran has sunk under a violent dose of brucine or of strychnine, which by some mistake, perhaps, has been given to her."

Villefort seized the doctor's hand. "Oh, it is impossible!" said he; "I must be dreaming! It is frightful to hear such things from such a man as you! Tell me, I entreat you, my dear doctor, that you are perhaps in error."

"Doubtless I may be, but —"

"But?"

"But I do not think so."

"Have pity on me, Doctor! So many dreadful things have happened to me lately that I think I am on the verge of madness."

"Has any one besides me seen Madame de Saint-Méran?"

"No one."

"Has anything been sent for from a chemist's that I have not examined?"

"Nothing."

"Had Madame de Saint-Méran any enemies?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"Has any one an interest in her death?"

"No, indeed! My God! no, indeed! My daughter is her only heiress, — Valentine alone. Oh, if such a thought came to me, I would stab myself to punish my heart for having for one instant harbored it."

"Indeed, my dear friend," said M. d'Avrigny, "I would not accuse any one; I speak only of an accident, you understand, — a mistake. But whether accident or mistake, the fact is there; it speaks to my conscience and compels me to speak aloud to you. Make inquiry."

"Of whom? how? of what?"

"May not Barrois, the old servant, have made a mistake, and have given Madame de Saint-Méran a dose prepared for his master?"

"For my father?"

"Yes."

"But how could a medicine prepared for M. Noirtier poison Madame de Saint-Méran?"

"Nothing is more simple. You know poisons become remedies in certain diseases; paralysis is one of those

diseases. For instance, having tried every other remedy to restore movement and speech to M. Noirtier, I resolved to try one last means, and for three months I have been giving him brucine; so that in the last dose I ordered for him there were six centigrammes. This quantity, which is without effect upon the paralyzed frame of M. Noirtier, — which, too, has become gradually accustomed to it, — would be sufficient to kill another person."

"My dear doctor, there is no communication between M. Noirtier's apartment and that of Madame de Saint-Méran, and Barrois never entered my mother-in-law's room. In short, Doctor, although I know you to be the most skilful physician and the most conscientious man in the world, and although in all circumstances your word is for me a guiding light as clear as sunlight, — well, Doctor, notwithstanding that trust in you, I must fall back upon the axiom, *errare humanum est.*"

"Listen, Villefort," said the doctor; "is there one of my brethren in whom you have as much confidence as in myself?"

"Why do you ask me that? What do you wish?"

"Send for him; I will tell him what I have seen and we will consult together and examine the body."

"And you will find traces of poison?"

"No, not of poison, — I have not said we could do that, — but we shall establish the excited condition of the nervous system. We shall discover the obvious, indisputable asphyxia; and we shall say to you: Dear Villefort, if this thing arises from negligence, watch over your servants; if from hatred, watch your enemies."

"What do you propose to me, D'Avrigny?" said Villefort, in despair. "So soon as another is admitted into our secret, an inquest will become necessary; and an inquest in my house — impossible! Still," continued the *procu-*

reur, looking at the doctor with uneasiness, "if you wish it, if you insist upon it, it shall be done. In fact, perhaps I ought to push that inquiry; my position devolves on me this obligation. But, Doctor, you see me already so grieved — how can I introduce into my house so much scandal, after so much sorrow? My wife and my daughter would die of it! And I — Doctor, you know that one does not arrive at the post I occupy — one has not been *procureur du roi* twenty-five years — without having made some enemies; mine are numerous. This affair, once got abroad, will be for them a triumph which will make them leap for joy, and it will cover me with shame. Pardon me, Doctor, these worldly ideas! Were you a priest I should not dare tell you that; but you are a man, and you know mankind. Doctor, Doctor, let it be as if you had told me nothing."

"My dear M. de Villefort," replied the doctor, "my first duty is humanity. I would have saved Madame de Saint-Méran if science could have done it; but she is dead, — my duty regards the living. Let us bury this terrible secret in the deepest recesses of our hearts; I am willing, if any one should suspect this, that my silence on this subject should be imputed to my ignorance. Meanwhile, Monsieur, watch always; watch diligently, — for perhaps the evil may not stop here. And when you have found the culprit, if you find him, I will say to you, You are a magistrate, do as you will!"

"I thank you, Doctor," said Villefort, with indescribable joy; "I never had a better friend than you." And as if he feared Dr. d'Avrigny would recall his promise, he hurried him towards the house.

When they were gone Morrel ventured out from under the trees, and the moon shone upon his face, which was so pale that he might have been taken for a ghost. "God protects me in an obvious, but terrible manner," said he.

"But Valentine, poor girl! how will she bear so much sorrow?"

As he said these words, he looked alternately at the window with red curtains and the three windows with white curtains. The light had almost disappeared from the former; doubtless Madame de Villefort had just put out her lamp, and the night-lamp alone reflected its dull light on the window. At the extremity of the building, on the contrary, he saw one of the three windows open. A wax-light placed on the mantel-piece threw some of its pale rays without, and a shadow was seen for one moment on the balcony. Morrel shuddered; he thought he heard a sob.

It cannot be wondered at that his mind, generally so courageous, but now disturbed by the two strongest human passions, love and fear, was weakened even to the indulgence of superstitious thoughts. Although it was impossible Valentine could see him, hidden as he was, he thought he heard the shadow at the window call him. His disturbed mind told him so; his glowing heart repeated it. This double error became an irresistible reality; and by one of those incomprehensible transports of youth, he bounded from his hiding-place, and with two strides, at the risk of being seen, at the risk of alarming Valentine, at the risk of being discovered by some exclamation which might escape the young girl, he crossed the flower-garden, which by the light of the moon resembled a large white lake, and having passed the rows of orange-trees which extended in front of the house, he reached the step, ran quickly up, and pushed the door, which opened without resistance. Valentine had not seen him; her eyes, raised towards heaven, were watching a silvery cloud gliding over the azure. Its form was that of a shadow mounting towards heaven; her poetic and excited mind pictured it

as the soul of her grandmother. Meanwhile, Morrel had traversed the ante-room and found the staircase, which being carpeted prevented his approach being heard; and besides, he had reached such a pitch of exaltation that the presence of M. de Villefort even would not have alarmed him. Had he encountered him, his resolution was formed; he would have approached him and acknowledged all, begging him to excuse and sanction the love which united him to his daughter, and his daughter to him. Morrel was mad. Happily he did not meet any one. Now especially did he find the description Valentine had given of the interior of the house useful to him; he arrived safely at the top of the staircase, and while at that point he paused in doubt, a sob indicated the direction he was to take. He turned back; a door partly open enabled him to see the reflection of a light, and to hear the sorrowing voice. He pushed it open and entered. At the other end of the room, under a white sheet which covered its head and showed the outline of its form, lay the dead body, especially appalling in the eyes of Morrel since the revelation of the secret which by chance he had overheard. By the side of the bed, on her knees, and her head buried in the cushion of an easy-chair, was Valentine, trembling and sobbing, her hands extended above her head, clasped and stiff. She had turned from the window, which remained open, and was praying in accents that would have affected the most unfeeling; her words were rapid, incoherent, unintelligible, — for the burning weight of grief almost stopped her utterance. The moon shining through the open blinds made the lamp appear to burn paler, and cast a sepulchral hue over that scene of desolation. Morrel could not resist this; he was not exemplary for piety, he was not easily impressed, but Valentine suffering, weeping, wringing her hands before

him, was more than he could bear in silence. He sighed and whispered a name; and the head bathed in tears and pressed on the velvet cushion of the chair — a head resembling the Magdalen of Correggio — was raised and turned towards him. Valentine perceived him without any sign of surprise. A heart overwhelmed with one great grief is insensible to minor emotions. Morrel held out his hand to her. Valentine, as her only excuse for not having met him, pointed to the corpse under the sheet and began to sob again. Neither dared for some time to speak in that room. They hesitated to break the silence which death seemed to impose; at length Valentine ventured.

"My friend," said she, "how came you here? Alas! I would say you are welcome, had not death opened the way for you into this house."

"Valentine," said Morrel, with a trembling voice, "I had waited since half-past eight, and did not see you come; I became uneasy, leaped the wall, found my way through the garden, when voices conversing about the fatal event —"

"What voices?" asked Valentine.

Morrel shuddered, — for all the conversation of the doctor and M. de Villefort came to his remembrance, and he thought he could see through the sheet the extended hands, the stiff neck, and the purple lips. "The voices of your servants," said he, "told me all."

"But to come here is to ruin everything, my friend," said Valentine, without fear, and without anger.

"Forgive me," replied Morrel, in the same tone; "I will go away."

"No," said Valentine, "you might meet some one; stay."

"But if any one should come here?"

The young girl shook her head. "No one will come," said she; "do not fear, there is our safeguard," pointing to the bed.

"But what has become of M. d'Épinay?" replied Morrel.

"M. Franz arrived to sign the contract just as my dear grandmother was dying."

"Alas!" said Morrel, with a feeling of selfish joy, — for he thought this death would cause the wedding to be postponed indefinitely.

"But what redoubles my sorrow," continued the young girl, as if this feeling must be punished instantly, "is that this poor dear grandmamma, on her death-bed, requested the marriage might take place as soon as possible; she also, — my God! — she also, thinking to protect me, took part against me."

"Hark!" said Morrel.

They both listened; steps were distinctly heard in the corridor and on the stairs.

"It is my father, who has just left his cabinet," said Valentine.

"To accompany the doctor to the door," added Morrel.

"How do you know it is the doctor?" asked Valentine, astonished.

"I imagine it must be," said Morrel.

Valentine looked at the young man. They heard the street door close; then M. de Villefort locked the garden door and returned upstairs. He stopped a moment in the ante-room, as if hesitating whether to turn to his own apartment or to Madame de Saint-Méran's. Morrel concealed himself behind a door. Valentine remained motionless; grief seemed to deprive her of all fear. M. de Villefort passed on to his own room.

"Now," said Valentine, "you can go out neither by

the front door nor by the garden." Morrel looked at her with astonishment. "There is but one way left you that is safe," said she; "it is through my grandfather's room." She rose; "Come," she added.

"Where?" asked Maximilian.

"To my grandfather's room."

"I in M. Noirtier's apartment?"

"Yes."

"Can you mean it, Valentine?"

"I have long wished it. He is my only remaining friend, and we both need his help; come."

"Be careful, Valentine," said Morrel, hesitating to comply with the young girl's wishes; "I now see my error; I acted as a madman in coming in here. Are you sure you are more reasonable?"

"Yes," said Valentine; "and I have but one scruple, — that of leaving my dear grandmother's remains, which I had undertaken to watch."

"Valentine," said Morrel, "death is in itself sacred."

"Yes," said Valentine; "besides, it will be for only a short time." She then crossed the corridor, and led the way down a narrow staircase to M. Noirtier's room; Morrel followed her on tiptoe. At the door they found the old servant.

"Barrois," said Valentine, "shut the door, and let no one come in." She entered first.

Noirtier, seated in his chair, and listening to every sound, was watching the door; he saw Valentine, and his eye brightened. There was something grave and solemn in the appearance of the young girl which struck the old man, and immediately his bright eye began to interrogate.

"Dear grandfather," said Valentine, hurriedly, "you know poor grandmamma died an hour since, and now I have no friend in the world but you."

An expression of infinite tenderness came to the eyes of the old man.

"It is, then, to you alone, is it not, that I ought to confide my sorrows and my hopes?"

The paralytic made an affirmative sign.

Valentine took Maximilian's hand. "Look attentively, then, at this gentleman." The old man fixed his searching gaze with slight astonishment on Morrel. "It is M. Maximilian Morrel," said she; "the son of that good merchant of Marseilles, of whom you have doubtless heard."

"Yes," said the old man.

"It is an irreproachable name, which Maximilian is likely to render glorious, since at thirty years of age he is a captain, and an officer of the Legion of Honor."

The old man signified that he recollected him.

"Well, Grandpapa," said Valentine, kneeling before him, and pointing to Maximilian, "I love him, and will be only his; were I compelled to marry another, I would destroy myself."

The eyes of the paralytic expressed a multitude of tumultuous thoughts.

"You like M. Maximilian Morrel, do you not, Grandpapa?" asked Valentine.

"Yes," said the motionless old man.

"And you will protect us, who are your children, against the will of my father?"

Noirtier cast an intelligent glance at Morrel, as if to say, "That depends."

Maximilian understood him. "Mademoiselle," said he, "you have a sacred duty to fulfil in your deceased grandmother's room; will you allow me the honor of a few minutes' conversation with M. Noirtier?"

"That is it," said the old man's eye. Then he looked anxiously at Valentine.

"Do you fear he will not understand you, dear grandpapa?"

"Yes."

"Oh! we have so often spoken of you that he knows exactly how I talk to you." Then turning to Maximilian with an adorable smile, although shaded by sorrow, "He knows everything I know," said she.

Valentine rose, placed a chair for Morrel, requested Barrois not to admit any one, and having tenderly embraced her grandpapa, and sorrowfully taken leave of Morrel, she went away. To prove to Noirtier that he was in Valentine's confidence and knew all their secrets, Morrel took the dictionary, a pen, and some paper, and placed them all on a table where there was a light.

"But first," said Morrel, "allow me, Monsieur, to tell you who I am, how much I love Mademoiselle Valentine, and what are my designs respecting her."

Noirtier made a sign that he would listen. It was an imposing spectacle, — this old man, apparently a useless burden, becoming the sole protector, support, and adviser of the lovers, who were both young, beautiful, and strong. His remarkably noble and austere expression struck Morrel, who began his recital with trembling. He related the manner in which he had become acquainted with Valentine, and how he had loved her; and that Valentine, in her solitude and unhappiness, had accepted the offer of his devotion. He told him of his birth, his position, his fortune; and more than once when he consulted the look of the paralytic, that look answered, "That is good; proceed."

"And now," said Morrel, when he had finished the first part of his recital, — "now I have told you of my love and my hopes, may I inform you of our plans?"

"Yes," signified the old man.

"This was our resolution: a cabriolet was in waiting at the gate, in which I intended to carry off Valentine to my sister's house to marry her, and to await, in an attitude of respectful expectation, M. de Villefort's pardon."

"No," said Noirtier.

"We must not do so?"

"No."

"You do not sanction our project?"

"No."

"There is another way," said Morrel.

The old man's interrogative eye said, "What?"

"I will go," continued Maximilian, "I will go and find M. Franz d'Épinay, — I am happy to be able to say this in Mademoiselle de Villefort's absence, — and will conduct myself towards him so as to compel him to act as a man of honor."

Noirtier's look continued to interrogate.

"You wish to know what I will do?"

"Yes."

"I will find him, as I told you; I will tell him of the ties which bind me to Mademoiselle Valentine. If he be a sensible man, he will prove it by renouncing of his own accord the hand of his betrothed, and will secure my friendship and love until death; if he refuse, either through interest or ridiculous pride, after I have proved to him that he would be forcing my wife from me, that Valentine loves me, and will love no other, I will fight with him, give him every advantage, and I shall kill him, or he will kill me. If I am victorious, he will not marry Valentine; and if I die, I am very sure Valentine will not marry him."

Noirtier watched with indescribable pleasure this noble and sincere countenance, on which every sentiment his tongue uttered was depicted, adding by the expression of his fine features all that coloring adds to a sound and

faithful drawing. Still, when Morrel had finished, he shut his eyes several times, which was his manner of saying "No."

"No?" said Morrel; "you disapprove of this second project, as you did of the first?"

"I do," signified the old man.

"But what must then be done, Monsieur?" asked Morrel. "Madame de Saint-Méran's last request was that the marriage might not be delayed; must I let things take their course?"

Noirtier did not move.

"I understand," said Morrel; "I am to wait."

"Yes."

"But delay will ruin us, Monsieur," replied the young man. "Alone, Valentine has no power; she will be compelled to submit. I am here almost miraculously, and can scarcely hope for so good an opportunity to occur again. Believe me, there are only the two plans I have proposed to you; forgive my vanity, and tell me which you prefer. Do you authorize Mademoiselle Valentine to intrust herself to my honor?"

"No."

"Do you prefer I should seek M. d'Épinay?"

"No."

"But, good heavens! whence will come the succor we believe that Providence will send?"

The old man smiled with his eyes, as he was accustomed to smile when any one spoke to him of Providence. There was always a little atheism in the ideas of the old Jacobin.

"From chance?" continued Morrel.

"No."

"From you?"

"Yes."

"You thoroughly understand me, Monsieur? Pardon my eagerness, for my life depends on your answer. Will our help come from you?"

"Yes."

"You are sure of it?"

"Yes."

There was so much firmness in the look which gave this answer that there could be no doubt of his will, at least, though there might be of his power.

"Oh, thank you a thousand times! But how, unless a miracle should restore your speech, your gesture, your movement, — how can you, chained to that armchair, dumb and motionless, oppose this marriage?"

A smile lit up the old man's face, — a strange smile of the eyes on a paralyzed face.

"Then I must wait?" asked the young man.

"Yes."

"But the contract?"

The same smile returned.

"Will you assure me it shall not be signed?"

"Yes," said Noirtier.

"So the contract will not be even signed!" cried Morrel. "Oh, pardon, Monsieur! on the announcement of a great happiness one has a right to be incredulous, — the contract will not be signed?"

"No," said the paralytic.

Notwithstanding that assurance, Morrel still hesitated. This promise of an impotent old man was so strange that instead of being the result of the power of his will, it might arise from feebleness of mind. Is it not natural that the madman, ignorant of his folly, should promise to ? his control? The weak man se, the timid of giants he can s he spends, the most humble

peasant, in the height of his pride, calls himself Jupiter. Whether Noirtier understood the young man's indecision, or whether he had not full confidence in his docility, he looked steadily at him.

"What do you wish, Monsieur," asked Morrel, — "that I should renew my promise of remaining tranquil?"

Noirtier's eye remained fixed and firm, as if to imply that a promise did not suffice; then it passed from his face to his hands.

"Shall I swear to you, Monsieur?" then asked Maximilian.

"Yes," said the paralytic, with the same solemnity.

Morrel understood that the old man attached great importance to that oath. He raised his hand. "I swear to you, on my honor," said he, "to await your decision respecting the course I am to pursue with M. d'Épinay."

"Good!" said the old man's eyes.

"Now," said Morrel, "do you wish me to retire?"

"Yes."

"Without seeing Mademoiselle Valentine?"

"Yes."

Morrel made a sign that he was ready to obey. "But," said he, "first, Monsieur, allow your son to embrace you as your daughter did just now."

Noirtier's expression could not be misunderstood. The young man pressed his lips on the same spot on the old man's forehead where Valentine's had been. Then he bowed a second time, and retired. He found the old servant outside the door, to whom Valentine had given directions; he conducted Morrel along a dark passage, which led to a little door opening on the garden. Morrel soon found the spot where he had entered; with the assistance of the shrubs he gained the top of the wall, and by his ladder was in an instant in the clover-field.

his cabriolet was still waiting for him. He got into it; and thoroughly wearied by so many emotions, but with a heart less burdened with anxiety, he arrived about midnight in the Rue Meslay, threw himself on his bed, and slept as if he had been deeply intoxicated.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE VILLEFORT FAMILY VAULT.

Two days after, a considerable crowd was assembled, towards ten o'clock in the morning, round the door of M. de Villefort's house; and a long file of mourning-coaches and private carriages extended along the Faubourg St. Honoré and the Rue de la Pépinière. Among them was one of a very singular form, which appeared to have come from a distance. It was a kind of covered wagon, painted black, and was one of the first at the funereal gathering. Inquiry was made; and it was ascertained that by a strange coincidence, this carriage contained the body of the Marquis de Saint-Méran, and that those who had come thinking to attend one funeral would follow two corpses. Their number was great. The Marquis de Saint-Méran — one of the most zealous and faithful dignitaries of Louis XVIII. and King Charles X. — had retained a great number of friends; and these, added to the personages on whom the usages of society gave Villefort a claim, formed a considerable body.

Due information was given to the authorities, and permission obtained that the two funerals should take place at the same time. A second hearse, decked with the same funereal pomp, was brought to M. de Villefort's door, and the coffin removed into it from the post-wagon. The two bodies were to be interred in the cemetery of Père la Chaise, where M. de Villefort had long since had a tomb prepared for the reception of his family. The remains of

poor Renée were already deposited there, whom, after ten years of separation, her father and mother were now going to rejoin. The Parisians, always curious, always affected by funereal display, looked on with religious silence, while the splendid procession accompanied to their last abode two of the number of the old aristocracy, — the most celebrated for their traditional habits of mind, their reliability, and their obstinate devotion to principles. In one of the mourning-coaches Beauchamp, Albert, and Château-Renaud were talking of the very sudden death of the marchioness. "I saw Madame de Saint-Méran only last year at Marseilles," said Château-Renaud, "and should have supposed she might have lived to be a hundred years old, from her apparent sound health and great activity of mind and body. How old was she?"

"Franz assured me," replied Albert, "that she was seventy years old. She has not died of old age, but of grief; it appears that since the death of the marquis, which affected her very deeply, she has not completely recovered her reason."

"But of what disease did she then die?" asked Beauchamp.

"It is said to have been a congestion of the brain, or apoplexy, which is the same thing, is it not?"

"Nearly."

"It is difficult to believe it was apoplexy," said Beauchamp. "Madame de Saint-Méran, whom I have seen once or twice, was short, of slender form, and of a much more nervous than sanguine temperament; grief could hardly produce apoplexy in such a constitution as that of Madame de Saint-Méran."

"At any rate," said Albert, "whatever disease or doctor may have killed her, M. de Villefort, or rather, Mademoiselle Valentine, — or rather again, our friend Franz,

inherits a magnificent fortune, amounting, I believe, to eighty thousand livres per annum."

"And this fortune will be doubled at the death of the old Jacobin, Noirtier."

"That is a tenacious old grandfather," said Beauchamp, --"*tenacem propositi virum*. I think he must have made an agreement with Death to outlive all his heirs; and he appears likely to succeed. He resembles the old Conventionalist of '93, who said to Napoleon in 1814, 'You bend because your empire is a young stem, weakened by rapid growth. Take the republic for a tutor; let us return with renewed strength to the battle-field, and I promise you five hundred thousand soldiers, another Marengo, and a second Austerlitz. Ideas do not become extinct, Sire; they slumber sometimes, but only revive the stronger before they sleep entirely.'"

"It appears," said Albert, "that to him ideas and men are alike. One thing only puzzles me, — how Franz d'Épinay will like a grandfather who cannot be separated from his wife. But where is Franz?"

"In the first carriage, with M. de Villefort, who considers him already as one of the family."

Such was the conversation in almost all the carriages. These two sudden deaths, so quickly following each other, astonished every one; but no one suspected the terrible secret which M. d'Avrigny had communicated in his nocturnal walk to M. de Villefort. They arrived in about an hour at the cemetery; the weather was mild but dull, and in harmony with the funeral ceremony. Among the groups which flocked towards the family vault, Château-Renaud recognized Morrel, who had come alone in a cabriolet, and walked, pale and silent, along the path bordered with yew-trees. "You here!" said Château-Renaud passing his arms through the young captain's; "are you a

friend of Villefort? How is it that I have never met you at his house?"

"I am no acquaintance of M. de Villefort's," answered Morrel, "but I was of Madame de Saint-Méran."

Albert came up to them at this moment with Franz. "The time and place are but ill-suited for an introduction," said Albert; "but we are not superstitious. M. Morrel, allow me to present to you M. Franz d'Épinay, — a delightful travelling companion, with whom I made the tour of Italy. My dear Franz, M. Maximilian Morrel, — an excellent friend I have acquired in your absence, and whose name you will hear me mention every time I make any allusion to affection, wit, or amiability."

Morrel hesitated for a moment. He feared it would be hypocritical to accost in a friendly manner the man whom he was tacitly opposing; but his oath and the gravity of the circumstances recurred to his memory. He struggled to conceal his emotion, and bowed to Franz.

"Mademoiselle de Villefort is in deep sorrow, is she not?" said Debray to Franz.

"Extremely," replied he; "she looked so pale this morning that I scarcely knew her."

These apparently simple words pierced Morrel to the heart. This man had then seen Valentine, and spoken to her! The young and high-spirited officer required all his strength of mind to resist breaking his oath. He took the arm of Château-Renaud, and turned towards the vault, where the attendants had already placed the two coffins.

"This is a magnificent habitation," said Beauchamp, looking towards the mausoleum; "a summer and winter palace. You will, in turn, enter it, my dear D'Épinay, for you will soon be numbered as one of the family. I, as a philosopher, should like a little country-house, — a cottage down there under the trees, without so many hewn-stones

over my poor body. In dying, I will say to those around me what Voltaire wrote to Piron, '*Eo rus*, and all will be over.' But come, Franz, take courage; your wife inherits."

"Indeed, Beauchamp," said Franz, "you are unbearable. Politics have made you laugh at everything, and men of business generally believe in nothing. But when you have the honor of associating with ordinary men, and the pleasure of leaving politics for a moment, try to find your affectionate heart, which you leave with your stick when you go to the Chamber of Deputies, or to the Chamber of Peers."

"Eh! my God!" said Beauchamp, "what is life? A pause in Death's ante-room."

"I am prejudiced against Beauchamp," said Albert, drawing Franz away, and leaving the former to finish his philosophical dissertation with Debray.

The Villefort vault formed a square of white stones, about twenty feet high; an interior partition separated the two families, Saint-Méran and Villefort, and each compartment had its entrance-door. Here were not, as in other tombs, those ignoble drawers, one above another, where economy encloses its dead with an inscription resembling a ticket; all that was visible within the bronze gates was a gloomy-looking room separated by a wall from the vault itself. The two doors before-mentioned were in the middle of this wall and opened into the Villefort and Saint-Méran tombs. There grief might freely expend itself without being disturbed by the trifling loungers who might come as a picnic party to visit Père la Chaise, or by lovers who made it their rendezvous.

The two coffins were placed on trestles previously prepared for their reception, and were borne into the right-hand division, belonging to the Saint-Méran family. Villefort, Franz, and a few near relatives alone entered the sanctuary.

As the religious ceremonies had all been performed at the door and there was no address given, the party separated immediately; Château-Renaud, Albert, and Morrel went one way, and Debray and Beauchamp another. Franz remained with M. de Villefort at the gate of the cemetery. Morrel made an excuse to wait; he saw Franz and M. de Villefort get into the same mourning-coach, and thought this *tête-à-tête* foreboded evil. He then returned to Paris; and although in the same carriage with Château-Renaud and Albert, he did not hear one word of their conversation.

As Franz was about to take leave of M. de Villefort, "When shall I see you again?" said the latter.

"At what time you please, Monsieur," replied Franz.

"As soon as possible."

"I am at your command, Monsieur; shall we return together?"

"If that will not disarrange your plans."

"Not at all."

Thus the future father-in-law and son-in-law stepped into the same carriage, and Morrel, seeing them pass, became, with reason, very anxious. Villefort and Franz returned to the Faubourg St. Honoré. The *procureur*, without going to see either his wife or his daughter, passed rapidly to his cabinet, and offering the young man a chair, "M. d'Épinay," said he, "allow me to remind you at this moment, which is perhaps not so ill-chosen as at first sight may appear, — for obedience to the wishes of the departed is the first offering which should be made at their tomb, — allow me, then, to remind you of the wish expressed by Madame de Saint-Méran on her death-bed, that Valentine's wedding might not be deferred. You know the affairs of the deceased are in perfect order, and that her will bequeaths to Valentine the entire property of the

Saint-Méran family; the notary showed me the documents yesterday which will enable us to draw up the marriage-contract with precise details. The notary is M. Deschamps, Place Beauvau, Faubourg St. Honoré."

"Monsieur," replied M. d'Épinay, "it is not perhaps the moment for Mademoiselle Valentine, who is in deep distress, to think of a husband; indeed, I fear —"

"Valentine," interrupted M. de Villefort, "will have no greater pleasure than that of fulfilling her grandmother's last injunctions; there will be no obstacle from that quarter, I assure you."

"In that case," replied Franz, "as I shall raise none, you may make arrangements when you please; I have pledged my word, and shall feel pleasure and happiness in adhering to it."

"Then," said Villefort, "nothing further is required; the contract was to have been signed three days since. We shall find it all ready, and can sign it to-day."

"But the mourning?" said Franz, hesitating.

"Fear not," replied Villefort; "no demands of propriety will be neglected in my house. Mademoiselle de Villefort may retire during the prescribed three months to her estate of Saint-Méran, — I say 'her estate,' for that property belongs to her. There, in a week, if you like, the civil marriage shall be celebrated without pomp or ceremony. Madame de Saint-Méran wished her granddaughter to be married there. When that is over, you, Monsieur, can return to Paris, while your wife passes the time of her mourning with her stepmother."

"As you please, Monsieur," said Franz.

"Then," replied M. de Villefort, "have the kindness to wait half an hour; Valentine shall come down into the drawing-room. I will send for M. Deschamps; we will read and sign the contract before we separate, and

this evening Madame de Villefort shall accompany Valentine to her estate, where we will rejoin them in a week."

"Monsieur," said Franz, "I have one request to make."

"What is it?"

"I wish Albert de Morcerf and Raoul de Château-Renaud to be present at this signing; you know they are my witnesses."

"Half an hour will suffice to apprise them; will you go for them yourself, or will you send?"

"I prefer going, Monsieur."

"I shall expect you, then, in half an hour, Baron; and Valentine will be ready."

Franz bowed and left the room. Scarcely had the door closed when M. de Villefort sent to tell Valentine to be ready in the drawing-room in half an hour, as he expected the notary and M. d'Épinay and his witnesses. The news caused a great sensation throughout the house; Madame de Villefort would not believe it, and Valentine was thunderstruck. She looked round for help and would have gone down to her grandfather's room; but she met M. de Villefort on the stairs, who took her arm and led her into the drawing-room. In the ante-room Valentine met Barrois, and looked despairingly at the old servant. One moment after, Madame de Villefort entered the drawing-room with her little Édouard. It was evident that she had shared the grief of the family, for she was pale and looked fatigued. She sat down, took Édouard on her knees, and from time to time pressed almost convulsively to her bosom this child, on whom she seemed to concentrate her whole life. Two carriages were soon heard to enter the court-yard. One was the notary's; the other, that of Franz and his friends. In a moment the whole party was assembled. Valentine was so pale that one might trace the blue veins from her temples round her eyes and down

her cheeks. Franz was deeply affected. Château-Renaud and Albert looked at each other with amazement; the ceremony which was just concluded had not appeared more sorrowful than did that which was about to begin. Madame de Villefort had placed herself in the shade behind a velvet curtain; and as she constantly bent over her child, it was difficult to read the expression of her face. M. de Villefort was, as usual, unmoved.

The notary, after having, according to the customary method, arranged the papers on the table, taken his place in an armchair, and raised his spectacles, turned towards Franz. "Are you M. Franz de Quesnel, Baron d'Épinay?" asked he, although he knew it perfectly.

"Yes, Monsieur," replied Franz.

The notary bowed. "I have, then, to inform you, Monsieur," said he, "at the request of M. de Villefort, that your projected marriage with Mademoiselle de Villefort has changed the feeling of M. Noirtier towards his grandchild, and that he disinherits her entirely of the fortune he would have left her. Let me hasten to add," continued he, "that the testator, having only the right to alienate a part of his fortune, and having alienated it all, the will will not sustain an attack, and will be declared null and void."

"Yes," said Villefort; "but I warn M. d'Épinay that during my lifetime my father's will shall never be attacked, since my position forbids incurring a breath of scandal."

"Monsieur," said Franz, "I regret much that such a question has been raised in the presence of Mademoiselle Valentine; I have never inquired into the amount of her fortune, which, however limited it may be, exceeds mine. My family has sought consideration in this alliance with M. de Villefort; all I seek is happiness."

Valentine imperceptibly thanked him, while two silent tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Besides, Monsieur," said Villefort, addressing himself to his future son-in-law, "aside from this loss of a part of your expectations, this surprising will contains nothing which should wound you personally; M. Noirtier's weakness of mind sufficiently explains it. It is not because Mademoiselle Valentine is going to marry you that he is angry, but because she will marry; a union with any other would have caused him the same sorrow. Old age is selfish, Monsieur; and Mademoiselle de Villefort has been a faithful companion to M. Noirtier, which she cannot be when Madame la Baronne d'Épinay. My father's melancholy state prevents our speaking to him on many subjects which the weakness of his mind would incapacitate him from understanding; and I am very sure that at the present time, although he knows his granddaughter is going to be married, M. Noirtier has even forgotten the name of his intended grandson."

M. de Villefort had scarcely said these words, to which Franz responded with a bow, when the door opened, and Barrois appeared. "Gentlemen," said he, in a tone strangely firm for a servant speaking to his masters under such solemn circumstances, — "gentlemen, M. Noirtier de Villefort wishes to speak immediately to M. Franz de Quesnel, Baron d'Épinay." He, like the notary, that there might be no mistake in the person, gave all his titles to the bridegroom elect.

Villefort started; Madame de Villefort let her son slip from her knees; Valentine rose, pale and dumb as a statue. Albert and Château-Renaud exchanged a second look, more full of amazement than the first. The notary looked at Villefort.

"It is impossible," said the *procureur du roi*. "M.

le Baron d'Épinay cannot leave the drawing-room at this moment."

"It is at this moment," replied Barrois, with the same firmness, "that M. Noirtier, my master, wishes to speak on important subjects to M. Franz d'Épinay."

"Grandpapa Noirtier can speak now, then," said Édouard, with his habitual impertinence. However, his remark did not make Madame de Villefort even smile, so much was every mind engaged, and so solemn was the situation.

"Say to M. Noirtier," said Villefort, "that it is impossible to comply with his request."

"Then M. Noirtier announces to these gentlemen," said Barrois, "that he will have himself brought into the drawing-room."

Astonishment was at its height. A kind of smile was perceptible on Madame de Villefort's countenance. Valentine instinctively raised her eyes as if to thank Heaven.

"Pray go, Valentine," said M. de Villefort, "and see what this new fancy of your grandfather's is." Valentine rose quickly, and was hastening towards the door, when M. de Villefort altered his intention.

"Stop!" said he; "I will go with you."

"Excuse me, Monsieur," said Franz; "it seems to me that since M. Noirtier has sent for me it is I who should respond to his wishes. Besides, I shall be happy to pay my respects to him, not having yet had the honor of doing so."

"Pray, Monsieur," said Villefort, with marked uneasiness, "do not disturb yourself."

"Forgive me, Monsieur," said Franz, in a resolute tone. "I would not lose this opportunity of proving to M. Noirtier how wrong it would be in him to entertain feelings of dislike to me, which I am determined to conquer, what-

ever they may be, by my devotedness." And without listening to Villefort he rose and followed Valentine, who was running down stairs with the joy of a shipwrecked mariner who finds a rock to cling to. M. de Villefort followed them. Château-Renaud and Morcerf exchanged a third look of still increasing wonder.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE DEPOSITION.

NOIRTIER was prepared to receive them, dressed in black, and installed in his armchair. When the three persons he expected had entered, he looked at the door, which his valet immediately closed.

"Listen," whispered Villefort to Valentine, who could not conceal her joy; "if M. Noirtier wishes to communicate anything which would delay your marriage, I forbid you to understand him."

Valentine blushed, but did not answer. Villefort approached Noirtier. "Here is M. Franz d'Épinay," said he; "you requested to see him. We have all wished for this interview, and I trust it will convince you how unfounded are your objections to Valentine's marriage."

Noirtier answered only by a look which made Villefort's blood run cold. He made with his eyes a sign to Valentine to approach. In a moment, thanks to her habit of conversing with her grandfather, she understood that he asked for a key. Then his eye was fixed on the drawer of a small chest between the windows. She opened the drawer and found a key; and understanding that was what he wanted, again watched his eyes, which turned towards an old secretary long since forgotten, and supposed to contain none but useless documents.

"Shall I open the secretary?" asked Valentine.

"Yes," said the old man.

"And the drawers?"

"Yes."

"Those at the side?"

"No."

"The middle one?"

"Yes."

Valentine opened it and drew out a bundle of papers. "Is that what you wish for?" asked she.

"No."

She took out successively all the other papers till the drawer was empty. "But there are no more," said she.

Noirtier's eye was fixed on the dictionary.

"Yes, I understand, Grandfather," said the young girl.

She pointed to each letter of the alphabet. At the letter S the old man stopped her. She opened the dictionary and searched down to the word "secret."

"Ah! is there a secret?" said Valentine.

"Yes," intimated Noirtier.

"And who knows it?"

Noirtier looked at the door where the servant had gone out.

"Barrois?" said she.

"Yes."

"Shall I call him?"

"Yes."

Valentine went to the door and called Barrois. Villefort's impatience during this scene made the perspiration roll from his forehead; and Franz was stupefied. The old servant came.

"Barrois," said Valentine, "my grandfather has told me to open that drawer in the secretary, but there is a secret about it which you know; will you open it?"

Barrois looked at the old man.

"Obey," said Noirtier's intelligent eye.

Barrois touched a spring; the false bottom came out.

and they saw a bundle of papers tied with a black string.

"Is that what you wish for, Monsieur?" inquired Barrois.

"Yes."

"Shall I give these papers to M. de Villefort?"

"No."

"To Mademoiselle Valentine?"

"No."

"To M. Franz d'Épinay?"

"Yes."

Franz, astonished, advanced a step. "To me, Monsieur?" said he.

"Yes."

Franz took them from Barrois, and casting his eye on the cover, read: —

"To be given, after my death, to General Durand, who shall bequeath the packet to his son, with an injunction to preserve it as containing a document of the greatest importance."

"Well, Monsieur," asked Franz, "what do you wish me to do with this paper?"

"To preserve it, sealed up as it is, doubtless," said the *procureur du roi.*

"No!" replied Noirtier, eagerly.

"Do you wish him to read it?" said Valentine.

"Yes," replied the old man.

"You understand, Monsieur the Baron, my grandfather wishes you to read this paper," said Valentine.

"Then let us sit down," said Villefort, impatiently, "for it will take some time."

"Sit down," said the eye of the old man.

Villefort took a chair; but Valentine remained standing by her grandfather's side, and Franz stood before him.

He took the mysterious paper in his hand. "Read," said the eyes of the old man. Franz broke the envelope, and in the midst of the most profound silence, read: —

"*Extract from the Procés-verbaux of a meeting of the Bonapartist Club in the Rue St. Jacques, held Feb. 5, 1815.*"

Franz stopped. "Feb. 5, 1815!" said he; "it is the day my father was murdered."

Valentine and Villefort were dumb; the eye of the old man alone seemed to say clearly, "Go on."

"But it was on leaving this club," said he, "that my father disappeared."

Noirtier's eye continued to say, "Read."

He resumed: —

"The undersigned — Louis Jacques Beaurepaire, lieutenant-colonel of artillery, Étienne Duchampy, brigadier-general, and Claude Lecharpal, keeper of streams and forests — declare that on the 4th of February a letter arrived from the Isle of Elba, recommending to the kindness and the confidence of the Bonapartist Club General Flavien de Quesnel, who, having served the emperor from 1804 to 1814, was supposed to be devoted to the interests of the Napoleon dynasty, notwithstanding the title of baron, which Louis XVIII. had just granted to him with his estate of Épinay.

"A note was in consequence addressed to General de Quesnel, begging him to be present at the meeting next day, the 5th. The note indicated neither the street nor the number of the house where the meeting was to be held; it bore no signature, but it announced to the general that some one would call for him, if he would be ready at nine o'clock. The meetings were always held from that time till midnight. At nine o'clock the president of the club presented himself; the general was ready. The president informed him that one of the conditions of his introduction was that he should be forever ignorant of the place of meeting, and that he would allow his eyes to be bandaged, swearing that he would not endeavor to take off the bandage.

General de Quesnel accepted the condition, and promised, on his honor, not to seek to discover the road they should take. The general's carriage was ready; but the president told him it was impossible to use it, since it would be superfluous to blind the eyes of the master, if the coachman was to go with eyes wide open to recognize the streets through which he passed. 'What must, then, be done?' asked the general. 'I have my carriage here,' said the president. 'Have you, then, so much confidence in your servant that you can intrust him with a secret you will not allow me to know?' 'Our coachman is a member of the club,' said the president; 'we shall be driven by a state-councillor.' 'Then we run another risk,' said the general, laughing, 'that of being turned out.' We insert this joke to prove that the general was not in the least compelled to attend this meeting, but that he came willingly. When they were seated in the carriage, the president reminded the general of his promise to allow his eyes to be bandaged, to which he made no opposition. On the road the president thought he saw the general make an attempt to remove the handkerchief, and reminded him of his oath. 'True,' said the general. The carriage stopped at a passage leading to the Rue St. Jacques. The general alighted, leaning on the arm of the president, of whose dignity he was not aware, considering him simply as a member of the club; they crossed the passage, mounted to the first story, and entered the meeting-room.

"The deliberations had already commenced. The members, apprised of the sort of presentation which was to be made that evening, were all in attendance. When in the middle of the room the general was invited to remove his bandage. He did so immediately, and appeared much surprised to see so many well-known faces in a society of whose existence he had till then been ignorant. They questioned him as to his sentiments; but he contented himself with answering that the letters from the Isle of Elba ought to have informed them —"

Franz interrupted himself by saying, "My father was a Royalist; they need not have asked his sentiments, which were well known."

"And hence," said Villefort, "arose my affection for your father, my dear M. Franz. A similarity of opinion soon binds."

"Read," the eye of the old man continued to say.

Franz continued: —

"The president then sought to make him speak more explicitly; but M. de Quesnel replied that he wished first to know what they wanted with him. He was then informed of the contents of the letter from the Isle of Elba, in which he was recommended to the club as a man who would be likely to advance the interests of their party. One paragraph alluded to the return of Bonaparte, and promised another letter, and further details, on the arrival of the 'Pharaon,' belonging to the ship-builder Morrel, of Marseilles, whose captain was entirely devoted to the emperor. During all this time, the general, on whom they thought to have relied as on a brother, manifested evident signs of discontent and repugnance. When the reading was finished he remained silent, with knit brow. 'Well,' asked the president, 'what do you say to this letter, General?' 'I say that it is too soon after declaring myself for Louis XVIII. to break my vow in behalf of the ex-emperor.'

"This answer was too clear to leave any doubt as to his sentiments. 'General,' said the president, 'we acknowledge no King Louis XVIII., nor an ex-emperor, but his Majesty the Emperor and King, driven from France, which is his kingdom, by violence and treason.' 'Excuse me, gentlemen,' said the general, 'you may not acknowledge Louis XVIII., but I do, as he has made me a baron and a field-marshal, and I shall never forget that for these two titles I am indebted to his happy return to France.'

"'Monsieur,' said the president, in a most serious tone, and rising as he spoke, 'be careful what you say; your words clearly show us that they are deceived concerning you in the Isle of Elba, and that we have been deceived! The communication which has been made to you testifies to the confidence placed in you, and consequently to a sentiment which does

you honor. Now we discover our error ; a title and promotion attach you to the government we wish to overturn. We will not constrain you to help us, — we enroll no one against his conscience ; but we will compel you to act honorably even if you are not disposed to do so.' 'You would call it acting honorably to know your conspiracy, and not to reveal it ; that is what I should call becoming your accomplice. You see I am more candid than you.' "

"Ah, my father!" said Franz, interrupting himself. "I understand now why they murdered him."

Valentine could not help casting one glance towards the young man, whose filial enthusiasm it was delightful to behold. Villefort walked to and fro behind him. Noirtier watched the expression of each one, and preserved his dignified and commanding attitude. Franz returned to the manuscript, and continued : —

" 'Monsieur,' said the president, 'you have been invited to join this assembly ; you were not forced here. It was proposed to you to come blindfolded ; you accepted. When you complied with this twofold request you well knew we did not wish to secure the throne of Louis XVIII., or we should not take so much care to avoid the vigilance of the police. It would be conceding too much to allow you to put on a mask to aid you in the discovery of our secret, and then to remove it that you may ruin those who have confided in you. No, no ; you must first say if you declare yourself for the king of a day who now reigns, or for his Majesty the Emperor.' 'I am a Royalist,' replied the general; 'I have taken the oath of allegiance to Louis XVIII., and I will adhere to it.' These words were followed by a general murmur; and it was evident that several of the members were discussing the propriety of making the general repent of his rashness. The president again rose, and having imposed silence, said, 'Monsieur, you are too serious and too sensible a man not to understand the consequences of our present situation, and your candor has already dictated to us the conditions which remain for us to

offer you. You will swear, then, upon honor, not to disclose anything that you have heard.' The general, putting his hand on his sword, exclaimed, 'If you talk of honor, do not begin by disavowing its laws, and impose nothing by violence.' 'And you, Monsieur,' continued the president, with a calmness still more terrible than the general's anger, 'do not touch your sword, I advise you.' The general looked around him with slight uneasiness ; however, he did not yield, but recalling all his strength, 'I will not swear,' said he. 'Then you must die,' replied the president, calmly. M. d'Épinay became very pale. He looked round him a second time ; several members of the club were whispering, and getting their arms from under their cloaks. 'General,' said the president, 'do not alarm yourself. You are among men of honor, who will use every means to convince you before resorting to the last extremity ; but as you have said, you are among conspirators, you are in possession of our secret, and you must restore it to us.' A significant silence followed these words, and as the general did not reply, 'Close the doors,' said the president to the door-keepers. The same deadly silence succeeded these words. Then the general advanced, and making a violent effort to control his feelings, 'I have a son,' said he ; 'and I must think of him, on finding myself among assassins.' 'General,' said the chief of the assembly, with a noble air, 'one man may insult fifty ; it is the privilege of weakness. But he does wrong to use his privilege. Follow my advice, swear, and do not insult.'

The general, again daunted by the superiority of the chief, hesitated a moment ; then advancing to the president's desk, 'What is the form ?' said he. 'It is this : "I swear by my honor not to reveal to any one what I have seen and heard on the 5th of February, 1815, between nine and ten o'clock in the evening ; and I admit myself deserving of death should I ever violate this oath." ' The general appeared to be affected by a nervous shudder, which prevented his answering for some moments ; then overcoming his manifest repugnance, he pronounced the required oath, but in so low a tone as to be scarcely audible to the majority of the members, who insisted on his

repeating it clearly and distinctly, which he did. 'Now am I at liberty to retire?' said he. The president rose, appointed three members to accompany him, and got into the carriage with the general after bandaging his eyes. One of those three members was the coachman who had driven them there. The other members of the club silently dispersed. 'Where do you wish to be taken?' asked the president. 'Anywhere out of your presence,' replied M. d'Épinay. 'Beware, Monsieur,' replied the president; 'you are no longer in the assembly, and have only to do with individuals; do not insult them unless you wish to be held responsible.' But instead of listening, M. d'Épinay went on, 'You are still as brave in your carriage as in your assembly, because you are still four against one.' The president stopped the coach. They were at that part of the Quai des Ormes where the steps lead down to the river. 'Why do you stop here?' asked D'Épinay. 'Because Monsieur,' said the president, 'you have insulted a man, and that man will not go one step farther without demanding honorable reparation.' 'Another method of assassination?' said the general, shrugging his shoulders. 'Make no noise, Monsieur, unless you wish me to consider you as one of those men whom you designated just now as cowards, who take their weakness for a shield. You are alone; one alone shall answer you. You have a sword by your side; I have one in my cane. You have no witness; one of these gentlemen will serve you. Now, if you please, remove your bandage.' The general tore the handkerchief from his eyes. 'At last,' said he, 'I shall know with whom I have to do.' They opened the door; the four men alighted."

Franz again interrupted himself, and wiped the cold drops from his brow; there was something awful in hearing the son, trembling and pale, read aloud these details of his father's death, which had hitherto remained unknown. Valentine clasped her hands as if in prayer. Noirtier looked at Villefort with an almost sublime expression of contempt and pride. Franz continued:—

"It was, as we said, the 5th of February. For three days there had been five or six degrees of frost; the steps were covered with ice. The general was stout and tall; the president offered him the side of the railing to assist him in getting down. The two witnesses followed. It was a dark night. The ground from the steps to the river was covered with snow and hoar-frost; the water of the river looked black and deep. One of the seconds went for a lantern in a coal-barge near, and by its light they examined the arms. The president's sword, which was simply, as he had said, one he carried in his cane, was five inches shorter than the general's and had no guard. The general proposed to cast lots for the swords, but the president said it was he who had given the provocation, and when he had given it he had supposed each would use his own arms. The witnesses endeavored to insist, but the president bade them be silent. The lantern was placed on the ground; the two adversaries put themselves in position; and the duel commenced. The light made the two swords appear like flashes of lightning; as for the men, they were scarcely perceptible, the darkness was so great. M. le Général d'Épinay passed for one of the best swordsmen in the army; but he was pressed so closely in the onset that he missed his aim and fell. The witnesses thought he was dead, but his adversary, who knew he had not struck him, offered him the assistance of his hand to rise. The circumstance irritated instead of calming the general, and he rushed on his adversary. But his opponent did not miss one stroke. Receiving him on his sword, three times the general drew back, and finding himself too closely pressed, returned to the charge. At the third he fell again. They thought he had slipped, as at first, and the witnesses, seeing that he did not move, approached and endeavored to raise him, but the one who passed his arm around the body felt under his hand a moist warmth, — it was blood. The general, who had almost fainted, revived. 'Ah!' said he, 'they have sent some fencing-master to fight with me.' The president, without answering, approached the witness, who held the lantern, and raising his sleeve, showed him two wounds he had received in his arm; then opening his coat, and unbutton-

ing his waistcoat, displayed his side, pierced with a third wound. Still he had not even uttered a sigh. The General d'Épinay died five minutes after."

Franz read these last words in a voice so choked that they were hardly audible, and then stopped, passing his hand over his eyes as if to dispel a cloud; but after a moment's silence, he continued: —

"The president went up the steps, after pushing his sword into his cane; a track of blood on the snow marked his course. He had scarcely arrived at the top when he heard a heavy splash in the water; it was the general's body, which the witnesses had just thrown into the river after ascertaining he was dead. The general fell, then, in a loyal duel, and not in ambush, as it might have been reported. In proof of this we have signed this paper to establish the truth of the facts, lest the moment should arrive when either of the actors in this terrible scene should be accused of premeditated murder or of infringement of the laws of honor.

"BEAUREPAIRE,
"DUCHAMPY,
"LECHARPAL."

When Franz had finished reading this account, so dreadful for a son; when Valentine, pale with emotion, had wiped away a tear; when Villefort, trembling and crouched in a corner, had endeavored to lessen the storm by supplicating glances at the implacable old man, — "Monsieur," said D'Épinay to Noirtier, "since you are well acquainted with all these details, which are attested by honorable signatures; since you appear to take some interest in me, although you have manifested it hitherto only by causing me sorrow, — refuse me not one final satisfaction; tell me the name of the president of the club, that I may at least know who killed my poor father."

Villefort mechanically felt for the handle of the door; Valentine, who had anticipated sooner than any one her grandfather's answer, and who had often seen two scars upon his right arm, drew back a few steps.

"Mademoiselle," said Franz, turning towards Valentine, "unite your efforts with mine to find out the name of the man who made me an orphan at two years of age."

Valentine remained dumb and motionless.

"Hold, Monsieur!" said Villefort, "do not prolong this dreadful scene. The names have been purposely concealed. My father himself does not know who this president was, and if he knows he cannot tell you; proper names are not in the dictionary."

"Oh, misery!" cried Franz; "the only hope which sustained me and enabled me to read to the end was that of knowing at least the name of him who killed my father! Monsieur! Monsieur!" cried he, turning to Noirtier, "in Heaven's name, do what you can! Make me understand in some way!"

"Yes," replied Noirtier.

"Oh, Mademoiselle! Mademoiselle!" cried Franz, "your grandfather says he can indicate — that man. Help me! lend me your assistance!"

Noirtier looked at the dictionary. Franz took it with a nervous trembling and repeated the letters of the alphabet successively until he came to M. At that letter the old man signified "Yes."

"M," repeated Franz. The young man's finger glided over the words, but at each one Noirtier answered by a negative sign. Valentine hid her head between her hands. At length Franz arrived at the word *moi* (myself).

"Yes," indicated the old man.

"You?" cried Franz, whose hair stood on end; "you, M. Noirtier? — you killed my father?"

"Yes," replied Noirtier, fixing a majestic look on the young man.

Franz fell powerless on a chair; Villefort opened the door and escaped, for the idea had entered his mind to stifle the little remaining life in the old man's heart.

END OF VOL. II.

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